OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

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BY

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BOOK I.

ADMONITIONS USEFUL FOR THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

OF THE

IMITATION OF CHRIST.

BOOK I.

Chapter I.—Of Imitating Christ, and Despising all the Vanities of the World.

He that followeth me walketh not in darkness, saith the Lord. These are the words of Christ, by which we are admonished how far we must imitate his life and manners if we would be truly enlightened and delivered from all blindness of heart.

Let it, then, be our chief study to meditate in the life of Jesus Christ.

The teaching of Christ surpasses all the teachings of the saints; and whosoever had the spirit would find therein the hidden manna.

But it happens that many, by the frequent hearing of the Gospel, feel little care for it, because they have not the spirit of Christ.

He, however, who would understand in their full savour the words of Christ, must study to make his whole life conformable to him.

What avails it thee to discourse deeply of the Trinity, if thou be void of humility and therefore displeasing to the Trinity?

In truth, it is not deep talk that makes a man holy and just; but a virtuous life that makes him dear to God.

I had rather feel compunction than know its definition.

If thou didst know the whole Bible by heart and the sayings of all the philosophers, what would it all profit thee without the love of God and grace?

Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity, beside loving God and serving him alone.

This is the highest wisdom; by despising the world to strive after heavenly kingdoms.

It is vanity therefore to seek after riches which must perish, and to trust in them.

It is vanity also to lay one's self out for honours, and to raise one's self to a high station.

It is vanity to follow the desires of the flesh, and to covet that for which we must afterwards be grievously punished.

It is vanity to wish for long life, and to take little care of leading a good life.

It is vanity to mind only this present life, and not to look forward to those things which are to come.

It is vanity to love that which passes with all

speed, and not to hasten thither where everlasting joy abides.

Often remember the proverb: The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is the ear filled with hearing.

Study therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to things invisible. For they who follow their own lust defile their conscience and lose the grace of God.

Chapter II.—Of having a Humble Opinion of Self.

Every man naturally desires to know; but what is the worth of knowledge without the fear of God?

Indeed a humble peasant who serves God, is better than a proud philosopher, who, neglecting him, considers the course of the heavens.

He who knows himself well becomes mean in his own eyes, and is not delighted by praise of men.

If I should know all things that are in the world, and were not in charity, what help would it be to me in the presence of God, who will judge me by my deeds?

Cease from a too great desire of knowing; because there is found therein much distraction and deceit.

They who are learned are desirous of appearing and of being called wise.

There are many things the knowledge of which is of little or no profit to the soul.

And he is very unwise who attends to any things but what serve to his salvation.

A multitude of words do not satisfy the soul; but a good life gives comfort to the mind, and a pure conscience affords great trust in God.

The more and the better thou knowest, the more heavy, therefore, will be thy judgment, unless thy life be the more holy.

Be not, therefore, puffed up by reason of any art or skill; but rather fear on account of the knowledge which is given thee.

If it seem to thee that thou knowest many things and understandest them well enough, know that at the same time there are many more things of which thou art ignorant.

Be not high-minded, but rather acknowledge thine ignorance.

Why wouldest thou prefer thyself to any one, since many are to be found more learned than thyself and more skilful in the law?

If thou wouldest know and learn something to the purpose, love to be unknown, and to be esteemed as nothing.

This is the highest and most profitable lesson, truly to know and to despise ourselves.

To have no opinion of ourselves, and to think always well and highly of others, is great wisdom and perfection.

If thou shouldest see another sin openly, or commit some grievous crime, yet thou oughtest not to esteem thyself better; because thou knowest not how long thou mayest be able to remain in a good state.

We are all frail; but as to thee do not think any one more frail than thyself.

Chapter III.—Of the Doctrine of Truth.

Happy is he whom truth teaches by itself, not by figures and words that pass, but as it is in itself.

Our opinion and our sense often deceive us and see very little.

What is the use of making a great dispute about hidden and obscure matters, for the being ignorant of which we shall not be accused in the judgment?

It is a great folly for us to neglect things profitable and necessary, and needlessly to busy ourselves about those which are curious and hurtful.

We have eyes and see not.

And what need have we to concern ourselves about *genera* and *species*?

He, to whom the eternal Word speaks, is set at liberty from a multitude of opinions.

From one Word are all things, and this one all

things speak ; and this is the Beginning, which also speaks to us.

Without this Word no one understands or judges rightly.

He to whom all things are one, and who draws all things to one, and who sees all things in one, may be steadfast in heart, and peaceably repose in God.

O God who art the truth, make me one with thee in everlasting love !

I am often wearied with reading and hearing many things: in thee is all that I will or desire.

Let all teachers hold their peace, let all creatures keep silence in thy sight ; speak to me thou alone.

The more a man is united within himself and inwardly simple, the more and higher things he understands without labour ; because he receives the light of understanding from above.

A pure, simple, and steady spirit is not distracted by a multitude of affairs ; because he does them all for the honour of God, and, at rest within himself, strives to be free from all self-seeking.

Who is a greater hindrance and trouble to thee than thine own unmortified affection of heart?

A good and devout man first lays out inwardly the works which he is to do outwardly.

Neither do they draw him to the desires of a vicious inclination ; but he bends them himself to the rule of right reason.

Who has a stronger conflict than he who strives to overcome himself?

And this should be our business: to strive to overcome ourselves and daily to become stronger than we were, and to make some advance towards the better.

All perfection in this life has some imperfection clinging to it, and no speculation is without a certain obscurity.

The humble knowledge of thyself is a surer way to God than a deep search after learning.

Learning is not to be blamed, nor is any mere knowledge of a subject; since this, considered in itself, is good, and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred before it.

But because many make it more their study to know than to live well, therefore they often err and bring forth little or no fruit.

Oh, if men would use as much diligence in rooting out vices and implanting virtues as they do in proposing questions, there would not be such great evils and scandals among the people, nor so much laxity in religious houses.

Verily, when the day of judgment comes, we shall not be asked what we have read, but what we have done; nor how well we have spoken, but how religiously we have lived.

Tell me, where are now all those great doctors and masters, whom thou knewest so well whilst they were alive and flourished in learning?

Others already possess their offices, and I know not whether they ever turn back their thoughts to them.

In their lifetime they seemed to be somewhat, and now they are not spoken of.

Oh, how quickly passes away the glory of the world! Would that their lives had been answerable to their learning! then would they have studied and read to good purpose.

How many perish in the world through vain learning, who take little care about serving God!

And because they choose rather to be great than humble, therefore they have become vain in their imaginations.

He is truly great who has great charity.

He is truly great who is little in his own eyes, and makes no account of any height of honour.

He is truly wise who looks upon all earthly things as dung that he may gain Christ.

And he truly is well learned who does the will of God and renounces his own will.

Chapter IV.—Of Prudence in our Doings.

We must not give credit to every word or suggestion, but should carefully and leisurely weigh the matter according to God.

Alas! so weak are we that we often more readily believe and speak of another that which is evil than that which is good.

But perfect men do not easily give credit to every

report, because they know that human frailty is prone to evil and very apt to fail in words.

It is great wisdom not to be rash in what we have to do, nor to maintain too obstinately our own opinion.

It is also wisdom not to believe every thing that men say, nor presently to pour into the ears of others the things which we have heard or believed.

Take counsel with a wise and conscientious man, and seek rather to be instructed by one that is better than to follow thine own inventions.

A good life makes a man wise according to God and experienced in many things. The more humble a man is in himself, and the more subject to God, the wiser will he be in all things and the more at peace.

Chapter V.—Of Reading the Holy Scriptures.

Truth is to be sought for in Holy Scripture, not eloquence.

All Holy Scripture ought to be read with that spirit with which it was made.

We must seek rather for profit in the Scripture, than for subtlety of speech.

We ought as willingly to read devout and simple books as those that are high and profound.

Let not the authority of the writer be a difficulty

to thee, whether he be of little or great learning; but let the love of simple truth lead thee to read.

Inquire not, who said this; but attend to what is said.

Men pass away, but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.

God speaks in many ways to us, without respect of persons.

Our own curiosity often hinders us in reading the Scriptures, when we wish to understand and discuss where we should simply pass on.

If thou wouldest draw profit therefrom, read with humility, simplicity, and faith; and seek not at any time the repute of being learned.

Willingly inquire after and hear with silence the words of the saints, and be pleased with the discourses of the elders; for they are not spoken without cause.

Chapter VI.—Of Inordinate Affections.

Whensoever a man desires anything inordinately, he is presently disquieted within himself.

The proud and covetous are never at rest.

The poor and humble of spirit live in the abundance of peace.

The man who is not yet perfectly dead to himself is soon tempted and overcome by small and trifling things.

He who is weak in spirit and still to some extent carnal and inclined to sensual things, can hardly withdraw himself wholly from earthly desires.

And therefore he is often sad when he withdraws himself from them, and is easily moved to anger if any one thwart him.

But if he has attained his inclinations, he is presently sad, because his conscience accuses him of having followed his passions, which help him not at all towards the peace he sought.

And so it is by resisting our passions that we are to find true peace of heart, and not by being slaves to them.

There is no peace, therefore, in the heart of a carnal man, nor in a man who is given to outward things, but in the fervent and spiritual man.

Chapter VII.—Of Flying vain Hope and Pride.

He is vain who puts his trust in men or in creatures.

Be not ashamed to serve others for the love of Jesus Christ, and to appear poor in this world.

Stand not on thyself, but place thy hope in God.

Do what is in thy power, and God will be with thy good will.

Trust not in thine own knowledge, nor in the

cunning of any man living, but rather in the grace of God, who helps the humble, and humbles those who presume on themselves.

Glory not in riches, if thou hast them; nor in friends, because they are powerful; but in God, who gives all things, and desires to give himself above all things.

Boast not of the size nor of the beauty of the body, which is spoiled and disfigured by a little sickness.

Take no pride in thy talents or thy wit; lest thou displease God, from whom comes every natural good which thou mayest possess.

Esteem not thyself better than others; lest, perhaps, thou be accounted worse in the sight of God, who knows what is in man.

Be not proud of thy good works; for the judgments of God are other than the judgments of men; and oftentimes that displeases him which pleases men.

If thou hast anything of good, believe still better things of others, that thou mayest preserve humility.

It does thee no harm to esteem thyself the worst of all; but it hurts thee very much to prefer thyself before even one.

With the humble is continual peace; but in the heart of the proud are envy and frequent anger.

Chapter VIII.—Of Shunning too much Familiarity.

Discover not thy heart to every man, but treat of thy affairs with one who is wise and fears God.

Keep not much company with young people and those who are without.

Be not a flatterer with the rich, nor willingly appear in the presence of the great.

Associate thyself with the humble and simple, with the devout and obedient; and treat of those things which may be to edification.

Be not a friend to any one woman, but recommend all good women in general to God.

Desire to be familiar only with God and his angels; and fly the acquaintance of men.

We must have charity towards all; but familiarity is not expedient.

It sometimes happens that a person, when not known, shines by a good reputation, who, when he is present, shows no light in the eyes of them that see him.

We think sometimes to please others by being with them; and we begin rather to disgust them by the inconsistency of conduct which they notice in us.

Chapter IX.—Of Obedience and Subjection.

It is a very great thing to stand in obedience, to live under a superior, and not to be our own masters.

It is much more secure to be in the state of subjection than in authority.

Many are under obedience more out of necessity than for the love of God; and such as these suffer and repine on the slightest occasion.

Nor will they gain freedom of mind, unless they submit themselves with their whole heart for the sake of God.

Run here or there, thou wilt find no rest but in humble subjection under the rule of a superior.

The fancying and the changing of places have deceived many.

It is true, every one is desirous of acting according to his own liking, and is more inclined to such as are of his own mind.

But if God be amongst us, we must sometimes give up our own opinion for the blessing of peace.

Who is so wise as to be able fully to know all things?

Therefore trust not too much to thine own

notions; but be willing even gladly to hear the sentiments of others.

Although thine opinion be good, yet, if for God's sake thou leavest it to follow that of another, it will be more profitable to thee.

For I have often heard that it is safer to hear and take counsel than to give it.

It may also happen that each man's idea may be good; but to refuse to yield to others, when reason or a just cause requires it, is a sign of pride and wilfulness.

Chapter X.—Of Avoiding Superfluity of Words.

Fly the tumult of men as much as thou canst; for treating of worldly affairs is a great hindrance, although they be discoursed of with a simple intention.

For we are soon tainted by vanity and led captive.

Oft times I could wish I had been silent, and that I had not been in company with men.

But why are we so willing to talk and discourse with one another, albeit we seldom return to silence without hurt of conscience?

The reason why we are so willing to talk is, because by discoursing together we seek comfort from one another, and would gladly ease the heart wearied by various thoughts.

And we willingly talk and think much of such things as we much love and desire, or of those which we imagine contrary to us.

But, alas, it is often in vain, and to no purpose; for this outward consolation is no small hindrance to inward and divine consolation.

Therefore we must watch and pray, that our time pass not away idly.

If it be lawful and expedient to speak, speak those things which may edify.

A bad habit, and a neglect of our advancement, is the great cause of our keeping so little guard upon our mouth.

But devout conferences on spiritual things help very much to spiritual progress, especially where persons of the same mind and spirit are associated together in God.

Chapter XI.—Of acquiring Peace and of Zeal in Progress.

We might have much peace, if we would not busy ourselves with the sayings and doings of others, and with things which are no concern of ours.

How can he remain long in peace who entangles himself with the cares of others; who seeks occasions for going abroad, and who is little or seldom inwardly recollected!

Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall have much peace.

What is the reason why some of the saints were so perfect and contemplative?

Because they made it their study wholly to mortify in themselves all earthly desires: and thus they were enabled to cleave with the whole marrow of their hearts to God, and freely to give their leisure to themselves.

We are too much taken up with our own passions, and too anxious about transitory things.

And seldom do we perfectly overcome so much as one vice, nor are we inflamed with the desire to improve every day; and therefore we remain cold and lukewarm.

If we were perfectly dead to ourselves, and no wise entangled in our inner hearts, then might we be able to relish things divine, and experience something of heavenly contemplation.

The one and the great hindrance is, that we are not free from passions and lusts, and do not strive to enter upon the perfect way of the saints.

And so when we meet with even a small difficulty, we are too quickly dejected, and we turn away for human consolation.

If we would strive like valiant men to stand in the battle, doubtless we should see the help of the Lord held over us from heaven.

For he is ready to help those who fight and

trust in his grace: he, who furnishes us with occasions of fighting that we may overcome.

If we place our progress in religion in outward observances only, our devotion will quickly be at an end.

But let us lay the axe to the root, that, being purged from passions, we may possess a quiet mind.

If every year we rooted out one vice we should soon become perfect men.

But now we often observe, on the contrary, that we find we were better and more pure in the beginning of our conversion, than after many years of profession.

Our fervour and progress ought to be every day greater; but now it is esteemed a great matter if a man can retain part of his first fervour.

If we would do a little violence to ourselves in the beginning, we might afterwards do all things with ease and joy.

It is hard to leave off old habits, but harder yet to go against our own will.

But if thou dost not overcome things that are small and light, when wilt thou overcome greater difficulties?

Resist thine inclination in the beginning, and unlearn the evil habit; lest perhaps by little and little it bring thee into greater difficulty.

Oh, if thou wert sensible how much peace thou wouldest procure for thyself and joy for others, by rightly ordering thyself, methinks thou wouldest be more solicitous for thy spiritual progress!

Chapter XII.—Of the Advantage of Adversity.

It is good for us to have sometimes troubles and adversities; for they make a man enter into his heart, that he may know that he is in banishment, and may not place his hope in any thing of this world.

It is good that we sometimes suffer contradictions and that men have an evil or imperfect opinion of us, even when we do and intend well.

These things are often helps to humility, and defend us from vain glory.

For then we better seek God, our inward witness, when outwardly men hold us cheap, and do not think well of us.

Therefore should a man establish himself in such manner in God, as to have no need of seeking many consolations from men.

When a man of good will is troubled or tempted, or afflicted with evil thoughts, then he better understands what need he has of God, without whom he finds he cannot do any good.

Then also he laments, sighs, and prays, by reason of the miseries which he suffers.

Then is he weary of living longer, and wishes death to come, that he may be dissolved and be with Christ.

Then also he well perceives that perfect security and full peace cannot long abide in this world.

Chapter XIII.—Of Resisting Temptation.

As long as we live in this world we cannot be without tribulation and temptation.

Whence it is written in Job, The life of man on earth is a temptation.

Therefore ought every one to be solicitous about his temptations, and to watch in prayer : lest the devil, who never sleeps, but goeth about seeking whom he may devour, find occasion to deceive him.

No man is so perfect and holy as not sometimes to have temptations ; and we cannot be wholly without them.

Yet temptations are often very useful to a man, although they be troublesome and grievous ; for in them a man is humbled, purified, and instructed.

All the saints have passed through many tribulations and temptations, and have profited by them : and they, who could not support temptations, became reprobate and fell away.

There is not any order so holy, nor place so secret, where there are not temptations and adversities.

A man is never wholly secure from temptations as long as he lives, because there is within us the

source of temptation, in that we were born in concupiscence.

When one temptation or tribulation is over, another comes on; and we shall have always something to suffer, because we have lost the good of our happiness.

Many seek to fly temptations, and fall into them more grievously.

By flight alone we cannot overcome; but by patience and true humility we are made stronger than all enemies.

He who only turns aside outwardly and does not pluck out the root, will make but little advance; nay, temptations will sooner return to him, and he will find himself in a worse condition.

By degrees and by patience with long-suffering, thou shalt by God's help better overcome them, than by harshness and by thine own restless striving.

In temptation often take counsel, and deal not roughly with one that is tempted; but console him as thou wouldest wish to be done to thyself.

Inconstancy of mind, and small confidence in God, are the beginning of all temptations to evil.

For as a ship without a rudder is driven to and fro by the waves, so the man who is remiss and gives up his resolution, is many ways tempted.

As fire tries iron, so temptation tries a just man.

We often know not what we can do; but temptation discovers what we are.

However we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of temptation; because then the enemy is more easily overcome, if he is in no wise suffered to come in at the door of the mind, but is met outside the threshold as soon as he has knocked.

Whence a certain man said: Withstand the beginning, after-remedies come too late.

For first a bare thought comes to the mind; then a strong imagination; afterwards pleasure, and evil motion, and consent.

And thus by little and little the wicked enemy gets full entrance, because he is not resisted in the beginning.

And the longer a man is sluggish in resisting, the weaker he daily becomes in himself, and the stronger the enemy becomes against him.

Some suffer greater temptations in the beginning of their conversion, and some in the end.

And some there are who are much troubled, we may say all their life.

Some are but lightly tempted, according to the wisdom and equity of the ordinance of God, who weighs the state and merits of men, and pre-ordains all for the salvation of his elect.

We must not therefore despair when we are tempted, but must pray to God with so much the more fervour, that he may vouchsafe to help us in all tribulation; who, according to the saying of Paul, will doubtless with the temptation make such a way of escape that we may be able to bear it.

Let us therefore humble our souls under the

hand of God in all temptation and tribulation; for he will save and exalt the humble in spirit.

In temptations and tribulations the progress of a man is tested: and in them there is greater merit, and his virtue is more apparent.

Nor is it much if a man be devout and fervent when he feels no trouble; but if in the time of adversity he bears up with patience, there will be hope of great advance.

Some are preserved from great temptations, and are often overcome in daily little ones; that, being humbled, they may never presume of themselves in great things, since they are weak in such small things.

Chapter XIV.—Of Avoiding Rash Judgment.

Turn thine eyes back upon thyself, and take heed thou judge not the doings of others.

In judging others a man labours in vain, often errs, and easily sins; but in judging and looking into himself he always labours with fruit.

We often judge of a thing according as we have it at heart; for we easily lose true judgment through private affection.

If God were always the one aim of our desire, we should not so easily be disturbed at resistance to our opinions.

But there is often something lying hid within,

or occurring from without, which draws us also along with it.

Many secretly seek themselves in what they do, and know it not.

They seem also to continue in good peace, when aught is done according to their will and judgment; but if it be done otherwise than they wish, they are soon moved and become sad.

Difference of thoughts and opinions is too often the source of dissensions, as among friends and citizens so amongst religious and devout persons.

An old habit is with difficulty relinquished; and no man is led willingly further than he himself sees.

If thou reliest more upon thine own reason or industry than upon the virtue that subjects to Jesus Christ, thou wilt seldom and slowly be an enlightened man; for God wills us to be perfectly subject to himself, and to transcend all reason by the ardour of our love.

Chapter XV.—Of Works done out of Charity.

No evil should be done either for any thing in the world, or for the love of any man; but for the profit of one that stands in need, a good work is sometimes freely to be given up for a while, or rather to be changed for a better.

For this is not the undoing of a good work, but the exchanging it for a better.

Without charity the outward work profits nothing; but whatever is done through charity, be it never so little and contemptible, all becomes fruitful.

For God weighs more with how much love a man works than how much he does.

He does much who loves much.

He does much who does well what he does.

He does well who serves rather the common weal than his own will.

That seems often to be charity which is rather yearning of the flesh; because natural inclination, our own self-will, hope of reward, love of our own ease, will seldom be wanting.

He that has true and perfect charity, seeks himself in nothing, but desires only the glory of God to be wrought in all things.

He envies no man, because he loves no private joy; nor does he desire to rejoice in himself; but above all good things to be made happy in God.

He attributes nothing of good to any man, but refers it wholly to God, from whom all things proceed as from their fount; in whom as their last end all the saints rest with joy.

Oh, he that had but one spark of true charity would doubtless perceive that all earthly things are full of vanity.

Chapter XVI.—Of Bearing the Defects of Others.

What a man cannot amend in himself or others he should bear with patience, till God ordains otherwise.

Think that perhaps it is better so for thy trial and patience, without which our merits are of little worth.

Thou shouldest, nevertheless, under such hindrances, earnestly pray that God may vouchsafe to help thee, and that thou mayest bear them in a kindly spirit.

If any one, after being once or twice admonished, does not give in, contend not with him; but leave all to God, that his will may be done and that he may be honoured in all his servants, who knows well how to bring good out of evil.

Study to be patient in bearing with the defects and infirmities of others, of what kind soever; because thou also hast many things which others must bear withal.

If thou canst not make thyself such as thou wouldest be, how canst thou have another to thy liking?

We would willingly have others perfect, and yet we mend not our own defects.

We would have others strictly corrected, but will not be corrected ourselves.

The large liberty of others displeases us, and yet we would not be denied what we ask.

We will that others should be bound by laws, and we suffer not ourselves to be in any wise restrained.

Thus it is evident how seldom we weigh our neighbour in the same balance with ourselves.

If all were perfect, what should we then have to suffer from others for the sake of God?

But now God has so ordained that we may learn to bear one another's burdens; for there is no man without defect, no man without his burden, no man sufficient for himself, no man wise enough for himself; but we must support one another, comfort one another, assist, instruct and admonish one another.

But how great is the virtue of each, best appears in occasion of opposition; for occasions do not make a man frail, but show what he is.

Chapter XVII.—Of the Monastic Life.

Thou must learn to break thine own will in many things, if thou wilt keep peace and concord with others.

It is no small matter to dwell in monasteries or in a congregation, and to live therein without reproof, and to persevere faithful till death.

Blessed is he who has lived well in that same place, and made a happy end.

If thou wilt stand as thou oughtest and make progress, look upon thyself as a banished man, a stranger upon earth.

Thou must be content to become a fool for Christ if thou wouldest lead a religious life.

The habit and the tonsure contribute little; it is a change of manners and an entire mortification of the passions that make a true religious.

He who seeks any other thing than God only, and the salvation of his soul, will find nothing but trouble and sorrow.

He cannot even long remain in peace, who does not strive to be the least and to be subject to all.

Thou camest hither to serve, not to rule: know that thou art called to suffer and to labour, not to be idle and talkative.

Here, then, men are tried as gold in the furnace.

Here no man can stand, unless he be willing with all his heart to humble himself for God.

Chapter XVIII.—Of the Examples of the Holy Fathers.

Look upon the lively examples of the holy fathers, in whom true perfection and religion were a shining light, and thou wilt see how little and almost nothing that is which we do.

Alas, what is our life if compared to theirs!

The saints and friends of Christ served the Lord in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness, in labour and weariness, in watchings and fastings, in prayers and holy meditations, in persecutions and many reproaches.

Oh, how many and grievous tribulations have the apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the rest suffered, who made up their minds to follow the footsteps of Christ! For they hated their lives in this world, that they might possess them for life eternal.

Oh, how strict and detached a life the holy fathers led in the desert! What long and grievous temptations they endured! How often were they molested by the enemy! What frequent and fervent prayers they offered to God! What rigorous fasts they observed! What great zeal and fervour had they for their spiritual progress! How strong a war they waged for the overcoming their vices!

How pure and upright was their intention towards God!

They laboured all the day, and in the night they gave themselves to long prayers; though even whilst they were at work, they ceased not from mental prayer.

They spent all their time profitably: every hour seemed short, which they gave to God: and through the great sweetness of contemplation they forgot even the necessity of their bodily refreshment.

They renounced all riches, dignities, honours, friends, and kindred; they desired to have nothing of this world; they scarcely took the necessaries of life; attention to the body, even when needful, was irksome to them.

They were poor therefore as to earthly things, but very rich in grace and virtues.

Outwardly they lacked, but inwardly they were refreshed with grace and divine consolation.

They were strangers to the world, but near to God, and his familiar friends.

They seemed to themselves as naught, and were despised by this world; but were precious and beloved in the eyes of God.

They stood in true humility, they lived in simple obedience, they walked in charity and patience; and therefore they daily advanced in spirit, and obtained great favour with God.

They were given as an example for all religious, and ought more to excite us to make good progress

than should the number of the lukewarm make us grow slack.

Oh, how great was the fervour of all religious in the beginning of their holy institution!

Oh, how great their devotion in prayer! How great their zeal for virtue!

What great discipline was in force amongst them! What great reverence and obedience in all flourished under the rule of a superior!

Their footsteps remaining still bear witness that they were right holy and perfect men, who, waging war so stoutly, trod the world under their feet.

Now he is thought great, who is not a transgressor, who can with patience endure what he has undertaken.

Oh, the lukewarmness and negligence of our state, that we so quickly fall away from our former fervour, and are now through sloth and listlessness even weary of living!

Would that advancement in virtues be not wholly asleep in thee, who hast often seen many examples of the devout!

Chapter XIX.—Of the Exercises of a Good Religious.

The life of a good religious ought to be eminent in all virtues, so that he may be such inwardly as he appears to men outwardly.

And with good reason ought he to be much more within than he appears without; because he who beholds us is God, of whom we ought exceedingly to stand in awe wherever we are, and to walk pure as angels in his sight.

We ought every day to renew our resolution, and to rouse ourselves to fervour, as if it were the first day of our conversion, saying:

Help me, O Lord God, in my good resolution and in thy holy service, and give me grace this very day really and truly to begin, for what I have hitherto done is nothing.

According as our resolution is, will be the course of our advancement: and he has need of much diligence who would advance much.

But if he who makes a strong resolution often fails, what will he do who seldom or but languidly resolves?

The falling off from our resolution happens in divers ways; and a light omission in our exercises seldom passes without some loss.

The resolutions of the just depend rather on the grace of God than on their own wisdom; and in him they always put their trust, whatever they take in hand.

For man proposes, but God disposes: nor is the way of man in himself.

If for compassion, or with a design to the profit of our brother, we sometimes omit an accustomed exercise, it may afterwards be easily recovered.

But if through a loathing of mind or negligence it be lightly let alone, it is no small fault and will prove hurtful.

Though we do what we can, we shall still be apt to fail in many things.

Yet we must always purpose something definite, and in particular against those things which hinder us most.

We must examine and order well what is without and within, because both conduce to our advancement.

If thou canst not continually recollect thyself, do it sometimes, and at least once a day, that is at morning or evening.

In the morning resolve, in the evening examine thy doings, how thou hast behaved this day in word, work, or thought; because in these perhaps thou hast often offended God and thy neighbour.

Gird thee like a man to resist the evil attacks of the devil; bridle gluttony, and thou wilt the more easily bridle all inclinations of the flesh.

Be never altogether idle : but be either reading or writing or praying or meditating, or labouring at something for the community.

Yet in bodily exercises a discretion is to be used, nor are they to be undertaken by all alike.

Those which are not common to all are not to be done in public ; for such as are personal are more safely done in secret.

But take care that thou be not slack in common exercises, and more forward in those of thine own choice ; but having fully and faithfully performed what thou art bound to do, and what is enjoined thee, if thou hast any time remaining, give thyself to thyself according as thy devotion shall incline thee.

All cannot have the same exercise ; this is more proper for one, and that for another.

Moreover, according to the diversity of times divers exercises are more pleasing ; for some relish better on festival days, others on common days.

We need one kind in time of temptation, and another in time of peace and rest.

Some things we willingly think about when we are sad, others when we are joyful in the Lord.

About the principal festivals we must renew our good exercises, and more fervently implore the prayers of the saints.

As feast by feast returns we should make our resolution, as if we were then to depart out of this world and to go to the everlasting feast.

Therefore we ought carefully to prepare ourselves at holy tides, and live more devoutly, and keep all our rule more strictly, as shortly about to receive the reward of our labours from God.

And if it be deferred, let us believe that we are not well prepared, and as yet unworthy of the great glory which shall be revealed in us at the appointed time; and let us endeavour to prepare ourselves better for our departure.

Blessed is that servant, saith the Evangelist Luke, whom his Lord, when he shall come, shall find watching. Amen, I say to you, he shall set him over all his goods.

Chapter XX.—Of the Love of Solitude and Silence.

Seek a proper time to retire into thyself, and often think over the benefits of God.

Let alone curious questions; read such matters as may rather move thee to compunction than give thee occupation.

If thou wilt withdraw thyself from superfluous talk and idle visits, as also from giving ear to news and reports, thou wilt find time sufficient and proper to employ thyself in good meditations.

The greatest of the saints avoided the company of men as much as they could, and rather chose to serve God in secret.

As often as I have been amongst men, said one, I have returned less a man; this we often experience when we talk long.

It is easier to be altogether silent than not to speak a word too much.

It is easier to keep retired at home than to be able to be sufficiently upon our guard abroad.

Whosoever, therefore, strives to attain to inward and spiritual things, must, with Jesus, go aside from the crowd.

No man safely goes abroad but he who willingly lies hid at home.

No man speaks safely but he who willingly holds his peace.

No man rules safely but he who is willingly ruled.

No man safely commands but he who has learnt well to obey.

No man safely rejoices unless he have within him the testimony of a good conscience.

Yet the security of the saints was always full of the fear of God.

Neither were they less careful or humble in themselves because they shone forth with great virtues and grace.

But the security of the wicked arises from pride and haughtiness, and in the end turns to their own deception.

Never promise thyself security in this life, though thou seemest to be a good religious or a devout hermit.

Oftentimes they who were more highly esteemed by men have been in greater danger by reason of their too great confidence.

So that for many it is better not to be altogether free from temptations, but to be often assaulted, lest they be too secure ; lest perhaps they be lifted up with pride, lest they more wantonly fall back upon outward consolations.

Oh, how good a conscience would that man preserve, who would never seek after transitory joy, nor ever busy himself with the world !

Oh, if a man would cut away all vain care, and think only of the things of God and his salvation, and place his whole hope in God, what great peace and quiet would he possess !

No man is worthy of heavenly consolation who has not diligently exercised himself in holy compunction.

If thou wouldest find compunction in thy very heart, enter into thy chamber and shut out the tumults of the world, as it is written : Be smitten with compunction in your chamber.

Thou wilt find in thy cell what thou wilt often lose abroad.

Thy cell, if thou continue in it, grows sweet ; but, if thou keep not to it, it becomes wearisome.

If in the beginning of thy conversion thou didst well inhabit and keep thy cell, it will be to thee ever after a dear friend and a most welcome solace.

In silence and quiet the devout soul goes forward, and learns the hidden things of the Scriptures.

There she finds floods of tears, with which she may wash and cleanse herself every night; that so she may become the more familiar with her creator, the further she lives from all worldly tumult.

For God with the holy angels will draw nigh to him who withdraws himself from his acquaintance and friends.

It is better for a man to lie hid and take care of himself, than, neglecting himself, to work miracles.

It is praiseworthy for a religious man to go seldom abroad, to shun being seen, and not even to desire to see men.

Why dost thou wish to see what it is not permitted thee to have? The world passeth away, and the desire of it.

The desires of sense draw thee to walk abroad; but when the hour is past, what dost thou bring back, save a weight upon thy conscience and dissipation of heart?

A joyous going abroad often brings forth a mournful return, and a late watch spent merrily makes a sad morning.

So all carnal joy enters pleasantly, but in the end it bites and kills.

What canst thou see elsewhere, which thou seest not here? Behold the heavens and the earth and all the elements; for of these are all things made.

What canst thou see anywhere which can continue long under the sun?

Thou thinkest perhaps to be satisfied, but thou canst not attain to it.

If thou couldest see all things at once before thee, what would it be but an empty show?

Lift up thine eyes to God on high, and pray for thy sins and negligences.

Leave vain things to the vain; but mind thou the things which God has commanded thee.

Shut thy door upon thee, and call to thee Jesus thy beloved.

Stay with him in thy cell; for nowhere else wilt thou find so great peace.

If thou hadst not gone abroad and heard aught that was said, thou wouldest have kept thyself better in good peace; but since thou takest pleasure sometimes in hearing news, thou must thence suffer disturbance of heart.

Chapter XXI.—Of Compunction of Heart.

If thou wilt make any progress, keep thyself in the fear of God; and be not too free, but restrain all thy senses under discipline, nor give thyself up to foolish mirth.

Give thyself to compunction of heart and thou shalt find devotion.

Compunction opens the way to much good, which dissipation of mind is wont quickly to destroy.

It is wonderful that any man can wholly rejoice in this life who considers and weighs his banishment and the many dangers of his soul.

Through levity of heart and the little thought we have of our defects, we feel not the sorrows of our soul, but often vainly laugh when in all reason we ought to weep.

There is no true liberty nor good joy but in the fear of God with a good conscience.

Happy is he who can cast away all hindrance from distraction, and betake himself once more to the oneness of holy compunction.

Happy is he who puts away from himself all that may defile or burden his conscience.

Strive manfully; habit is overcome by habit.

If thou canst let men alone, they will let thee alone to do what thou hast to do.

Busy not thyself with matters of other men, nor entangle thyself with the affairs of the great.

Have always an eye upon thyself in the first place, and be sure to admonish thyself rather than all thy friends.

If thou hast not the favour of men, be not grieved thereat; but let this be thy sorrow, that

thou dost not carry thyself so well and so circumspectly as it would become a servant of God and a devout religious to live.

It is oftentimes more profitable and more secure for a man not to have many consolations in this life, especially according to the flesh.

Yet, that we have not divine consolations, or that we seldom experience them, is our own fault; because we do not seek compunction of heart, nor cast off altogether vain and outward consolation.

Know thyself unworthy of divine consolation, but rather worthy of much sorrow.

When a man has perfect compunction, then the whole world is burdensome and bitter to him.

A good man always finds matter enough for mourning and weeping.

For whether he considers himself or thinks of his neighbour, he knows that no man lives here without tribulation; and the more closely he considers himself, the more he grieves.

The matter for just grief and inward sorrow is our sins and vices, in which we lie entangled so that we are seldom able to contemplate heavenly things.

If thou wouldest oftener think of thy death than of the length of thy life, no doubt thou wouldest more fervently amend thyself.

And if thou didst seriously consider in thy heart the future punishments of hell or purgatory, I believe thou wouldest willingly endure labour and pain, and dread no kind of austerity.

But because these things reach not down to the heart, and because we still love the things which delight us, therefore we remain cold and very sluggish.

It is oftentimes poverty of the spirit which makes the wretched body so easily complain.

Pray therefore humbly to the Lord that he may give thee the spirit of compunction ; and say with the prophet, Feed me, O Lord, with the bread of tears, and give me for drink tears in measure.

Chapter XXII.—Of the Consideration of the Misery of Man.

Thou art miserable wherever thou art, and which way soever thou turnest thyself, unless thou turn thyself to God.

Why art thou troubled because things do not succeed with thee according to thy will and desire?

Who is there who has all things according to his will?

Neither I, nor thou, nor any man upon earth.

There is no man in the world without some trouble or affliction, though he be king or pope.

Who is it that is most at ease? doubtless he who is willing to suffer something for God.

Many unstable and weak men say, Behold how well such a man lives, how rich he is, how great, how mighty and powerful.

But fix thine eyes on heavenly goods, and thou wilt see that all these temporal things are no goods at all; but are very uncertain, and rather burdensome, because they are never possessed without care and fear.

The happiness of a man consists not in having temporal things in abundance, but a moderate competency suffices him.

It is truly a misery to live upon earth.

The more a man desires to be spiritual, the more this present life becomes bitter to him; because he the better understands and the more clearly sees the defects of human corruption.

For to eat, drink, watch, sleep, rest, labour, and to be subject to other necessities of nature, is truly a great misery and affliction to a devout man who desires to be released and free from all sin.

For the inward man is very much burthened in this world with the necessities of the body.

And therefore the prophet devoutly prays to be freed from them as far as he can, saying: From my necessities deliver me, O Lord.

But woe to them that know not their own misery; and greater woe to them that love this wretched and corruptible life.

For some there are who love it to that degree, although they can scarce procure necessaries by labouring or begging, that, if they could live always here, they would not care at all for the kingdom of God.

O fools and faithless of heart, who lie buried

so deep in earthly things as to relish nothing but things of the flesh.

Miserable wretches! they will in the end find to their cost, how worthless and nothing that was which they loved.

But the saints of God and all the devout friends of Christ regarded not what pleased the flesh nor what flourished in this life, but their whole hope and aim panted after the good things that are eternal.

Their whole desire tended upwards to things lasting and invisible, lest the love of visible things should draw them down to things below.

Lose not, brother, thy confidence of going forward to spiritual things; there is yet time, the hour is not yet past.

Why wilt thou put off thy resolution from day to day? Arise, and begin this very moment, and say: Now is the time to act, now is the time to fight, now is the proper time to amend.

When thou art troubled and afflicted, then is the time to merit.

Thou must pass through fire and water, before thou comest to the place of refreshing.

Unless thou do violence to thyself thou wilt not overcome vice.

As long as we carry about us this frail body, we cannot be without sin nor live without weariness and sorrow.

We would fain be at rest from all misery; but, because we have lost innocence by sin, we have also lost true blessedness.

We must therefore have patience and wait for the mercy of God, till this iniquity pass away and mortality be swallowed up of life.

Oh, how great is human frailty, which is always prone to vice!

To-day thou confessest thy sins, and to-morrow thou again committest what thou didst confess.

Now thou resolvest to take care, and after an hour thou dost as if thou hadst never resolved.

We have reason therefore to humble ourselves and never to think anything great of ourselves, since we are so frail and unstable.

That may also quickly be lost through negligence, which with much labour was hardly at length gotten by grace.

What will yet become of us in the end who grow lukewarm so soon?

Woe to us if we are for giving ourselves to rest as if we had already met with peace and security, when as yet there does not appear any trace of true holiness in our life.

It would be very needful that we should yet again, like good novices, be instructed in all excellent behaviour; if so there might perchance be hope of some future amendment and of greater spiritual progress.

Chapter XXIII.—Of the Thought of Death.

Very soon will there be an end of thee here: consider thy condition elsewhere: a man is to-day, and to-morrow he is gone.

But when he is taken away from sight, he quickly also passes out of mind.

Oh, the dulness and hardness of man's heart, which thinks only on what is present, and looks not still more to the things that are to come!

Thou oughtest in every action and thought so to order thyself as if thou wert this day to die.

If thou hadst a good conscience thou wouldest not much fear death.

It were better for thee to take heed not to sin than to be afraid of death.

If thou art not prepared to-day, how wilt thou be to-morrow?

To-morrow is an uncertain day; and how dost thou know that thou wilt have a to-morrow?

What profits it to live long, when we are so little the better?

Ah, a long life does not always mend us, but often adds to our guilt!

Would that we had passed but one day well in this world!

Many count the years of their conversion; but oftentimes the fruit of amendment is small.

If it be full of fear to die, perhaps it will be more dangerous to live longer.

Blessed is he who has always the hour of death before his eyes, and every day disposes himself to die.

If thou hast ever seen a man die, think that thou must also pass through the same way.

In the morning think thou wilt not come to evening; and at evening dare not promise thyself the morning.

Be therefore always ready, and live in such wise that death may never find thee unprepared.

Many die suddenly and when they look not for it; for the Son of Man will come at the hour when he is not looked for.

When that last hour shall come, thou wilt begin to have quite other thoughts of thy whole past life, and thou wilt be exceedingly grieved that thou hast been so negligent and remiss.

How happy and prudent is he who strives to be such now in life as he desires to be found at death.

For it will give a man a great confidence of dying happily, if he has a perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire of advancing in virtue, a love of discipline, the toil of penance, a ready obedience, self-denial, and patience in bearing all adversities for the love of Christ.

Thou mayest do many good things whilst thou

art well; but, when thou art sick, I know not what thou canst do.

Few are improved by sickness; they also, who go on many pilgrimages, seldom become holy.

Trust not in thy friends and kinsfolk, and put not off the care of thy soul to hereafter; for men will sooner forget thee than thou dost think.

It is better now to provide in time, and send some good before thee, than to trust in the help of others.

If thou art not careful for thyself now, who will be careful for thee hereafter?

Now time is very precious; now is the day of salvation; now is the acceptable time.

But alas! that thou dost not more profitably spend this time, wherein thou canst earn that whereby thou mayest live for ever. The time will come, when thou wilt wish for one day or hour to amend; and I know not whether thou wilt obtain it.

Come then, my beloved, from how great a danger mayest thou deliver thyself, from how great a fear mayest thou be freed, if thou wouldest only be always fearful, and looking for death!

Make it thine aim so to live now, that in the hour of thy death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear.

Learn now to die to the world, that then thou mayest begin to live with Christ.

Learn now to despise all things, that then thou mayest freely go to Christ.

Chastise thy body now by penance, that thou mayest then have an assured confidence.

Ah fool! why dost thou think to live long, when thou art not sure of one day?

How many have been deceived, and have been unexpectedly snatched from the body!

How often hast thou heard it related, such an one was slain by the sword, another was drowned, another falling from on high broke his neck, this man grew stark in chewing his food, that other came to his end when he was at play?

Some have perished by fire, some by steel, some by pestilence, and some by robbers.

Thus death is the end of all; and man's life passes suddenly like a shadow.

Who will remember thee after death, and who will pray for thee?

Do, my beloved, do now all thou canst, because thou knowest not when thou shalt die; nor knowest thou what shall befall thee after death.

Whilst thou hast time, heap up to thyself undying riches; think of nothing but thy salvation; care only for the things of God.

Make now to thyself friends by honouring the saints of God and imitating their actions, that when thou shalt fail in this life they may receive thee into everlasting habitations.

Keep thyself as a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth, to whom the affairs of this world do not at all belong.

Keep thy heart free and raised upwards to God, because thou hast here no abiding city.

Send thither thy daily prayers and sighs with tears, that thy spirit may be worthy to pass after death happily to the Lord.

Amen.

Chapter XXIV.—Of Judgment, and the Punishment of Sins.

In all things look to the end, and see how thou wilt be able to stand before the strict judge, from whom nothing is hidden; who is not appeased by bribes, who admits no excuses, but will judge that which is just.

O most wretched and foolish sinner, what answer wilt thou make to God, who knows all thy evil deeds—thou, who sometimes art afraid of the looks of an angry man?

Why dost thou not provide for thyself against the day of judgment, when no man can be excused or defended by another, but when every one will be burden enough for himself?

Now thy labour is fruitful, thy tears are acceptable, thy sighs can be heard, thy sorrow is satisfactory and purifying.

A patient man has a great and wholesome purification, who, receiving injuries, is more concerned at the sin of another than his own wrong; who

willingly prays for his adversaries, and from his heart forgives offences; who delays not to ask pardon of others; who is more easily moved to pity than to anger: who often does violence to himself, and strives to bring the flesh wholly under subjection to the spirit.

It is better now to purge out our sins and cut away our vices, than to reserve them to be purged hereafter.

Truly we deceive ourselves through the inordinate love we bear to the flesh.

What other things shall that fire feed on but thy sins?

The more thou sparest thyself now, and followest the flesh, the more grievously shalt thou suffer hereafter, and the more fuel dost thou lay up for the flame.

In what things a man hath sinned, in these shall he be more heavily punished.

There the slothful are plied with fiery goads, and the gluttons will be tormented with extreme thirst and hunger.

There the luxurious and the lovers of pleasures will be bathed in burning pitch and stinking brimstone, and like mad dogs the envious will howl for grief.

There is no vice which will not have its proper torment.

There the proud will be filled with all confusion, and the covetous be straitened with most miserable want.

There one hour of suffering will be more sharp than a hundred years spent here in the most rigid penance.

No rest, no consolation is there for the damned; but here there is now and then pause from toil, and we receive solace from our friends.

Be anxious and sorrowful for thy sins now, that in the day of judgment thou mayest be secure with the blessed.

For then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them and kept them down.

Then will he stand to judge, who now humbly submits himself to the judgments of men.

Then the poor and humble will have great confidence, and the proud will fear on every side.

Then he will seem to have been wise in this world, who learned for Christ to be a fool and despised.

Then all tribulation suffered with patience will be pleasing, and all iniquity shall stop her mouth. Then every devout man will rejoice, and every irreligious man will mourn.

Then the flesh that has been mortified will triumph more than if it had always been nurtured in delights.

Then will the mean attire shine, and fine clothing appear as under a shade.

Then will the poor cottage be more commended than the gilded palace.

Then will constant patience be of more avail than all the power of the world.

Then will simple obedience stand higher than all worldly craftiness.

Then shall a pure and good conscience more rejoice a man than all the philosophy he has learned.

Then shall the contempt of riches weigh more than all the treasure of the earth-born.

Then shalt thou be more comforted because thou hast prayed devoutly than because thou hast fared daintily.

Then shalt thou be more glad for having kept silence than for much gossip.

Then shall holy works be of greater value than many fair words.

Then shall a strict life and hard penance be more pleasing than all the delight of earth.

Learn now to suffer in little things, that then thou mayest be delivered from more grievous sufferings.

Try first here what thou canst suffer hereafter.

If thou canst now endure so little, how wilt thou be able to bear everlasting torments?

If a little suffering now makes thee so impatient, what will hell-fire do hereafter?

Behold now, thou canst not truly have the two joys, to delight thyself here in the world, and then reign with Christ.

If to this day thou hadst always lived in honours and pleasures, what would it all avail thee if thou wert now in a moment to die?

All, then, is vanity but to love God and to serve him only.

For he, who loves God with his whole heart, fears neither death nor punishment nor judgment nor hell; because perfect love gives secure access to God.

But it is not wonderful that he, who still takes delight in sin, should be afraid of death and judgment.

It is good, however, that, if love as yet reclaim thee not from evil, at least the fear of hell restrain thee.

But he that lays aside the fear of God will not be able to continue long in good, but will quickly run into the snares of the devil.

Chapter XXV.—Of the Fervent Amendment of our Whole Life.

Be vigilant and diligent in the service of God, and often think for what end thou camest hither, and why thou hast left the world. Was it not that thou mightest live to God and become a spiritual man?

Strive fervently therefore towards perfection, for in a short time thou shalt receive the reward of thy labours; and then grief and fear shall no more be within thy borders.

Thou wilt labour a little now, and thou shalt find great rest, yea, everlasting joy.

If thou continue faithful and fervent in working,

God will doubtless be faithful and abundant in rewarding.

Thou must hold fast a good and firm hope of gaining the palm ; but thou must not think thyself secure, lest thou wax negligent or be puffed up.

When one who often anxiously wavered between hope and fear, was one day consumed with sadness, he prostrated himself in prayer in the church before a certain altar, and revolved these things within himself, saying, Oh, if I did but know that I should persevere on and on ! All at once he heard within himself the divine answer : And what wouldest thou do if thou knewest this ? Do now what thou wouldest then do, and thou wilt be safe enough.

And presently being comforted and strengthened, he committed himself to the divine will, and his anxious wavering ceased.

Neither had he a mind to search curiously to know what should befall him hereafter, but he studied rather to inquire what was the acceptable and perfect will of God for the beginning and accomplishing of every good work.

Trust in the Lord and do good, saith the prophet, and dwell in the land, and thou shalt be fed with its riches.

There is one thing which keeps many back from progress and fervent amendment—a dread of the difficulty or the labour of the conflict.

For in truth they advance most above others

in virtue, who strive more manfully to overcome those things which they find more grievous and repugnant to them.

For there a man makes more progress and merits greater grace where he more overcomes and mortifies himself in spirit.

But all men have not so much to overcome, and to mortify.

Yet he, who is diligent and zealous, although he has more passions, will be able to make greater progress than another, who is of good conduct, but is withal less fervent in the pursuit of virtues.

Two things particularly further a great amendment : these are, that a man should forcibly withdraw himself from that to which nature is viciously inclined, and earnestly labour for that good which he lacks the most.

Study likewise to fly more carefully and to overcome those faults which most frequently displease thee in others.

Turn all occasions to thy profit ; so that, if thou seest or hearest good examples, thou mayest be on fire to imitate them.

But if thou observe anything that is blameworthy, take heed thou do not the same ; or if thou at any time hast done it, labour to amend thyself out of hand.

As thine eye observes others, so thou art also noted by others.

How pleasant and sweet it is to see brethren fervent and devout, regular and well-disciplined !

How sad it is and grievous to see those walk disorderly who practise nothing of that to which they are called.

How hurtful it is to neglect the very object of our vocation, and to turn our minds to things that are not entrusted to us!

Be mindful of the resolution thou hast taken up, and set before thee the image of the Crucified.

Well mayest thou be ashamed, if thou hast looked upon the life of Jesus Christ, that thou hast not yet studied to conform thyself more to him, although thou hast been long in the way of God.

A religious, who exercises himself seriously and devoutly in the most holy life and passion of the Lord, will find there abundantly all things useful and necessary for him; nor need he seek any better thing beyond Jesus.

Oh, if Jesus crucified did but come into our heart, how quickly and sufficiently should we be taught!

A fervent religious bears and takes all things well that are commanded him.

A negligent and lukewarm religious has trouble upon trouble, and is straitened on every side; because he has no consolation within, and is forbidden to seek any without.

A religious, who lives in neglect of his rule, lies open to dreadful ruin.

He who seeks to be more loose and remiss will

always be straitened, for one thing or other will displease him.

How do so many other religious, who live under strict monastic discipline?

They seldom go abroad, they live retired, their diet is very poor, their habit coarse, they labour much, they speak little, they watch long, they rise early, they spend much time in prayer, they read often, and keep themselves in all discipline.

Consider the Carthusians, the Cistercians, and the monks and nuns of divers orders; how every night they rise to sing psalms to the Lord.

It would therefore be a shame for thee to be sluggish in so holy an exercise, when such a multitude of religious begin to cry aloud to God.

Oh, that we had nothing else to do but to praise the Lord our God with our whole heart and mouth!

Oh, that thou didst never want to eat or drink or sleep, but couldest be always praising God and be employed solely in spiritual exercises!

Thou wouldest then be much more happy than now, whilst from some need or other thou art serving the flesh.

Would there were no such needs, but only the spiritual refreshments of the soul, which, alas, we taste too seldom!

When a man is come to this, that he seeks his consolation from no creature, then he begins to have the first perfect relish for God; then likewise will he be well content, whatever befall him.

Then will he neither rejoice for much, nor be sorrowful for little, but he puts himself wholly and confidently in God's hands, who is to him all in all; to whom nothing perishes or dies, but all things live to him, and at his beck they serve without delay.

Always remember the end, and that time once lost never returns.

Without care and diligence thou shalt never acquire virtues.

If thou beginnest to grow lukewarm thou wilt begin to be uneasy.

But, if thou givest thyself to fervour, thou wilt find great peace; and thou wilt feel labour lighter for the grace of God and love of virtue.

A fervent and diligent man is ready for all things.

It is harder work to resist vices and passions than to sweat over bodily labours.

He that shuns not small defects, by little and little falls into greater.

Thou wilt always rejoice in the evening, if thou spend the day profitably.

Watch over thyself, stir thyself up, admonish thyself; and whatever becomes of others, neglect not thyself.

The greater violence thou offerest to thyself, the greater progress thou wilt make. Amen.

BOOK II.

ADMONITIONS LEADING TO THE INTERIOR LIFE.

BOOK II.

Chapter I.—Of the Interior Life.

The kingdom of God is within you, saith the Lord.

Turn thyself with thy whole heart to the Lord and forsake this miserable world, and thy soul shall find rest.

Learn to despise outward things and to give thyself to those that are within, and thou shalt see the kingdom of God come unto thee.

For the kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which is not given to the wicked.

Christ will come to thee, holding out to thee his consolation, if thou prepare him a fit dwelling within thee.

All his glory and beauty is within, and therein he takes delight.

Many a visit does he make to the interior man, sweet is his communication with him, delightful his consolation, great his peace, and his familiarity exceedingly amazing.

Come therefore, O faithful soul, prepare thy heart for this thy spouse, that he may vouchsafe to come to thee and dwell in thee.

For so he saith: If any man love me, he will keep my word, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him.

Give place then, for Christ, and deny entrance to all others.

When thou hast Christ, thou art rich, and he is sufficient for thee. He will provide for thee and faithfully supply thy wants in all things, so that thou needest not trust to men.

For men quickly change and presently fail; but Christ abides for ever, and stands by us firmly even to the end.

There is no great confidence to be put in a frail and mortal man, however useful and dear; nor much grief to be taken, if sometimes he be against thee and cross thee.

They who are with thee to-day, may be against thee to-morrow; and often turn round and change like the wind.

Put thy whole trust in God, and let him be thy fear and thy love. He will answer for thee and do well for thee what is for the best.

Thou hast here no abiding city; and wherever thou art thou art a stranger and a pilgrim; nor wilt thou ever have rest, unless thou be most closely united to Christ.

Why dost thou look around thee here, since this is not the place of thy repose?

Thy dwelling should be in heaven, and all things of the earth are only to be looked upon as in passing.

All things pass away, and thou likewise along with them.

See that thou cleave not to them, lest thou be ensnared and perish.

Let thy thought be with the Most High, and thy prayer directed to Christ without ceasing.

If thou knowest not how to meditate on high and heavenly things, rest in the passion of Christ and willingly dwell in his sacred wounds.

For, if thou flee devoutly to the wounds and precious marks of Jesus, thou shalt feel great comfort in tribulation ; neither wilt thou much regard the being despised by men, but wilt easily bear up against words of detraction.

Christ also was in this world despised by men, and in his greatest need forsaken by his acquaintance and friends in the midst of reproaches.

Christ was willing to suffer and be despised ; and dost thou dare to complain of any one?

Christ had adversaries and gainsayers ; and wouldest thou have all to be thy friends and benefactors?

Whence shall thy patience be crowned, if naught that is contrary happen unto thee?

If thou wilt suffer no opposition, how wilt thou be a friend of Christ?

Bear up with Christ and for Christ, if thou desirest to reign with Christ.

If thou hadst once perfectly entered into the heart of Jesus and tasted some little of his burning love, then wouldest thou not care at all for thine

own convenience or inconvenience, but wouldest rather rejoice at reproach cast upon thee; because the love of Jesus makes a man despise himself.

A lover of Jesus and of truth, one who is truly of the inner life and free from inordinate affections, can freely turn himself to God, and in spirit raise himself above himself, and rest in enjoyment.

He, to whom all things relish as they are, and not as they are said or esteemed to be, is wise indeed, and taught rather by God than men.

He who knows how to live inwardly and to make little account of outward things, seeks not for places and waits not for times for performing devout exercises.

A man of the inner life quickly recollects himself, because he never pours forth his whole self upon outward things.

Outward labour is no hindrance to him, nor any employment which for a time is necessary, but as things fall out, so he accommodates himself to them.

He who is well disposed and ordered within, heeds not the strange and perverse carriage of men.

As much as a man draws things to himself, so much is he hindered and distracted.

If all were well with thee, and thou wert well purified, all things would turn to thy good and to thy profit.

For this reason many things displease thee and often trouble thee, because thou art not as yet per-

fectly dead to thyself nor separated from all earthly things.

Nothing so defiles and entangles the heart of man as impure love for the creature.

If thou turn away from outward consolations thou wilt be able to contemplate heavenly things, and frequently to exult within.

Chapter II.—Of Humble Submission.

Make no great account who is for thee or against thee, but let it be thy business and thy care that God may be with thee in every thing that thou doest.

See thou have a good conscience and God will well defend thee.

For him, whom God will help, the malice of no man can hurt.

If thou canst but hold thy peace and suffer, thou shalt see without doubt the help of the Lord.

He knows the time and manner of delivering thee, and therefore thou shouldest resign thyself to him.

It belongs to God to help and to deliver from all confusion.

Oftentimes it is very profitable for keeping us in greater humility that others know and blame our faults.

When a man humbles himself for his defects, he

then easily appeases others, and quickly satisfies those that are angry with him.

God protects and delivers the humble: the humble he loves and comforts: to the humble man he inclines himself: to the humble he gives much grace; and after he has been cast down, raises him to glory.

To the humble he reveals his secrets, and sweetly draws and invites him to himself.

The humble man, though he suffer shame, is well enough in peace, because he stands fast in God and not in the world.

Never think that thou hast made any progress till thou look upon thyself as inferior to all.

Chapter III.—Of a Good Peaceable Man.

First keep thyself in peace, and then thou wilt be able to bring others to peace.

A peaceable man does more good than one that is very learned.

A passionate man perverts even good into evil, and easily believes evil.

A good peaceable man turns all things to good.

He who is in perfect peace suspects no man; but he who is discontented and disturbed, is tossed about with various suspicions; he is neither at rest himself, nor does he suffer others to rest.

He often says that which he should not say, and omits that which it would be better for him to do.

He considers what others are bound to do, and neglects that to which he himself is bound.

Be therefore first zealous against thyself, and then thou mayest justly exercise thy zeal towards thy neighbour also.

Thou knowest well enough how to excuse and colour thine own doings, and thou wilt not take the excuses of others.

It were more just that thou shouldest accuse thyself and excuse thy brother.

If thou wilt be borne with, bear also with another.

See how far thou art yet from true charity and humility, which knows not how to be angry with any one, or to be indignant save against self.

It is no great thing to live with them that are good and meek, for this is naturally pleasing to all.

And every one lives willingly in peace, and loves those best who agree with him.

But to be able to live peaceably with the obstinate and perverse or disorderly, is a great grace and a very praiseworthy and manly feat.

Some there are who keep themselves in peace and have peace also with others.

And some there are who are neither at peace within themselves nor let others be in peace; they

are a burthen to others, but always a heavier burthen to themselves.

And some there are who keep themselves in peace and study to bring others unto peace.

Yet all our peace in this miserable life is rather to be placed in humble endurance, than in not feeling what is against us.

He that knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace.

Such an one is conqueror of himself and lord of the world, a friend of Christ and an heir of heaven.

Chapter IV.—Of a Pure Mind and Simple Intention.

On two wings a man is lifted up above earthly things; that is, on simplicity and purity.

Simplicity should be in the intention, purity in the affection.

Simplicity aims at God, purity takes hold of him and tastes him.

No good action will hinder thee if thou be free from inordinate affection within.

If thou intendest and seekest nothing else but the good pleasure of God and the profit of thy neighbour, thou wilt enjoy internal liberty.

If thy heart were right, then every creature

would be to thee as a mirror of life and a book of holy doctrine.

There is no creature so little and contemptible as not to manifest the goodness of God.

If thou wert good and pure within, then wouldest thou see all things without hindrance, and understand them aright.

A pure heart penetrates into heaven and hell.

As a man is within, so he judges what is without.

If there be joy in the world, certainly the man whose heart is pure possesses it.

And if there be anywhere tribulation and anguish, an evil conscience knows it too well.

As iron put into the fire loses the rust and becomes all aglow, so a man who turns himself wholly to God puts off his sluggishness, and is changed into a new man.

When a man begins to grow lukewarm, he is afraid of a little labour, and gladly welcomes consolation from without.

But when he begins perfectly to overcome himself, and to walk manfully in the way of God, then he makes less account of those things which before he considered burthensome to him.

Chapter V.—Of the Consideration of Self.

We cannot trust much to ourselves, because we often lack grace and discernment.

There is but little light in us, and this we quickly lose through negligence.

Many times also we perceive not that we are so blind within.

We often do ill, and do worse in excusing it.

We are sometimes moved with passion, and think it zeal.

We blame little things in others, and pass over greater things in ourselves.

We are quick enough at perceiving and weighing what we suffer from others, but we mind not what others suffer from us.

He who would well and duly weigh his own deeds would not be disposed to judge harshly of others.

The interior man puts the care of himself before all other cares; and he who diligently attends to himself is easily silent with regard to others.

Thou wilt never be interior and devout, unless thou be silent about the concerns of other men, and particularly look to thyself.

If thou attend wholly to thyself and to God, thou wilt be little moved by what thou perceivest around thee.

Where art thou when thou art not present to thyself?

And when thou hast run over all things, what profit will it be to thee if thou hast neglected thyself?

If thou must needs have peace and true union, thou must cast all else behind thee and turn thine eyes upon thyself alone.

Thou wilt then make great progress if thou keep thyself free from all temporal care.

Thou wilt fail exceedingly if thou set a value upon any thing temporal.

Let nothing be great, nothing high, nothing pleasant, nothing agreeable to thee, except it be purely God or related to God.

Look upon all the consolation which thou findest in any creature as vain.

A soul that loves God despises all things lower than God.

God alone is eternal, infinite in greatness, filling all things; the solace of the soul and the true gladness of the heart.

Chapter VI.—Of the Joy of a Good Conscience.

The glory of a good man is the witness of a good conscience.

Keep a good conscience, and thou shalt always have gladness.

A good conscience can bear very much, and is exceeding joyful in the midst of adversity.

A bad conscience is always timid and uneasy.

Sweetly wilt thou rest if thy heart blame thee not.

Never be glad but when thou hast done well.

The wicked have never true gladness, nor feel peace within; because there is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord.

And if they shall say: We are in peace, evils will not come upon us, and who shall dare to hurt us? believe them not; for the wrath of God will arise on a sudden, and their deeds shall be brought to nought, and their thoughts shall perish.

To glory in tribulation is not hard to him who loves; for so to glory is to glory in the cross of the Lord.

That glory is short-lived which is given and taken by men.

The glory of the world is always accompanied by sorrow.

The glory of the good is in their consciences, and not in the mouths of men.

The gladness of the just is from God and in God, and their joy is in the truth.

He who desires true and everlasting glory values not that which is temporal.

And he that seeks after temporal glory or does not despise it from his heart, shows himself to have little love for that which is heavenly.

That man has great tranquillity of heart who cares neither for praises nor dispraises.

He will easily be content and in peace whose conscience is clean.

Thou art not more holy if thou art praised, nor worse if thou art dispraised.

What thou art, that thou art; nor canst thou be said to be greater than God sees thee to be.

If thou considerest well what thou art within thyself, thou wilt not care what men may say of thee.

Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.

Man considers the actions, but God weighs the intentions.

To do always well and to hold self in small account is a mark of an humble soul.

To refuse comfort from any creature is a sign of great purity and of inward trust.

He that seeks no outward testimony for himself, plainly has committed himself wholly to God.

For not he who commendeth himself, saith blessed Paul, is approved, but he whom God commendeth.

To walk with God within, and not to be held by any affection without, is the state of an interior man.

Chapter VII.—Of the Love of Jesus above all Things.

Blessed is he who knows what it is to love Jesus, and to despise himself for the sake of Jesus.

We must quit what we love for this beloved, because Jesus will be loved alone above all things.

The love of the creature is deceitful and fleeting; the love of Jesus is faithful and enduring.

He who cleaves to creatures shall fall with that which totters; he who embraces Jesus shall be established for ever.

Love him, and keep him for thy friend, who, when all go away, will not leave thee nor suffer thee to perish at the last.

Thou must one day be parted from all things else, whether thou willest or not.

Keep thyself with Jesus both in life and in death, and commit thyself to his faithfulness, who alone can help thee when all else fail thee.

Thy beloved is of such a nature that he will not accept that which belongs to another; but he will have thy heart for himself, and will sit as a king on his own throne.

If thou didst but know how to free thyself en-

tirely from every creature, Jesus would readily dwell with thee.

Thou wilt find almost all lost, which thou hast stored up in men apart from Jesus.

Do not trust nor lean upon a reed shaken with the wind; for all flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof will fall as the flower of grass.

Thou wilt soon be deceived if thou regard only the outward show of men.

For if thou seek thy comfort and thy gain in others, thou wilt often meet with loss.

If in all things thou seek Jesus, without fail thou wilt find Jesus.

But if thou seek thyself, thou wilt find thyself indeed, but to thine own ruin.

For a man is more hurtful to himself if he seek not Jesus, than the whole world and all his enemies.

CHAPTER VIII.—OF FAMILIAR FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS.

WHEN Jesus is with us, all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is not with us, every thing is hard.

When Jesus speaks not within, our comfort is naught; but if Jesus speak only one word, we feel great consolation.

Did not Mary Magdalene arise presently from

the place where she wept, when Martha said to her: The Master is come, and calleth for thee?

Happy the hour when Jesus calls from tears to joy of the spirit!

How parched and hard art thou without Jesus! How unwise and vain if thou desire any thing out of Jesus! Is not this a greater loss than if thou wert to lose the whole world?

What can the world bestow on thee without Jesus?

To be without Jesus is a grievous hell, and to be with Jesus a sweet paradise.

If Jesus be with thee no enemy can harm.

Whosoever finds Jesus finds a good treasure, yea, a good above all good.

And he who loses Jesus loses exceeding much, and more than the whole world.

None so poor as he who lives without Jesus; and none so rich as he who is well with Jesus.

It is a great art to know how to live with Jesus, and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom.

Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee.

Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will abide with thee.

Thou mayest quickly drive away Jesus and lose his grace, if thou wilt fall back upon outward things.

And if thou drive him away from thee and lose him, to whom wilt thou fly, and whom wilt thou then seek as thy friend?

Without a friend thou canst not well live; and

if Jesus be not thy friend above all, thou wilt be exceeding sad and desolate.

Thou actest then like a fool if thou puttest thy trust or rejoicest in any other.

We ought rather to choose to have the whole world against us than to offend Jesus.

Of all therefore that are dear to thee, let Jesus alone be thine especially beloved.

Let all be loved for the sake of Jesus, but Jesus for his own sake.

Jesus Christ alone is to be loved with an exclusive love, since he alone is found good and faithful above all friends.

For him and in him let both friends and enemies be dear to thee; and for all these must thou entreat him, that all may know and love him.

Never desire to be praised or loved above others; for this belongs to God alone, who hath none like to himself.

Neither desire that any should set his heart on thee, nor do thou let thyself be taken up with the love of any one, but let Jesus be in thee and in every good man.

Be pure and free within, and be not entangled by any creature.

Thou must be naked and carry a pure heart to God, if thou wilt rest and see how sweet the Lord is.

And truly thou wilt never attain to this unless thou be prevented and drawn by his grace; that

so thou alone mayest be united to him alone, having cleared out and said farewell to all others.

For when the grace of God comes to a man, then is he powerful for all things; and when it departs, then he is poor and weak, abandoned as it were only to stripes.

Under these he should not be cast down nor despair, but stand with an even mind, according to the will of God, and bear to the praise of Jesus Christ whatever comes upon him; because after winter comes summer, after the night the day returns, and after a storm a great calm.

Chapter IX.—Of the Want of all Solace.

It is no great matter to despise all human solace when we have that which is divine.

It is a great thing and very great, to be able to do without all solace, both human and divine, and to be willing to bear this exile of the heart for the honour of God, and in nothing seek self, and not to have regard to one's own merit.

What great thing is it if thou be cheerful and devout when grace comes to thee? This is an hour desirable to all.

He rides at ease whom the grace of God carries.

And what wonder if he feel no burthen, who is carried by the Almighty and led on by the sovereign guide?

We are glad to have something to comfort us, and it is with difficulty that a man can put off himself.

The holy martyr, Laurence, with his priest, overcame the world, because he despised whatever seemed delightful in this world; and for the love of Christ he also suffered the high priest of God, Sixtus, whom he exceedingly loved, to be taken away from him.

He overcame therefore the love of man by the love of the Creator; and instead of human solace, he made choice rather of the good pleasure of God.

So do thou also learn to part with some familiar and beloved friend for the love of God.

And take it not to heart when thou art forsaken by a friend, knowing that one time or other we must all part.

A man must go through a long and great conflict within himself before he can learn fully to overcome himself, and to draw his whole affection towards God.

When a man stands upon himself, he easily falls off to human consolation.

But a true lover of Christ and a diligent follower after virtue does not fall back on consolations, nor seek such sensible sweetnesses, but is

rather willing to bear strong trials and hard labours for Christ.

Therefore, when God gives spiritual comfort, receive it with thanksgiving; but know that it is the gift of God, not thy desert.

Be not puffed up, be not overjoyed, nor vainly presume; but rather be the more humble because it is a gift, and the more cautious and wary in all thy actions; for this hour will pass away and temptation will follow.

When consolation shall be taken away, do not presently give up hope, but wait with humility and patience for the heavenly visit; for God is able to give thee back again a fuller consolation.

This is no new thing, nor strange to those who have experienced the ways of God; for in the great saints and ancient prophets this has often been the way, that the one changes for the other.

Hence one said at the time when grace was with him: In my abundance I said, I shall never be moved.

But when grace was withdrawn, he immediately tells us what he experienced in himself: Thou didst turn away thy face from me, and I was troubled.

Yet in the mean time he despairs not, but more earnestly prays to the Lord, saying: To thee, O Lord, will I cry, and I will pray to my God.

At length he receives the fruit of his prayer, and witnesses that he was heard, saying: The Lord hath

heard me, and hath had mercy on me; the Lord hath become my helper.

But how? Thou hast turned for me, saith he, my mourning into joy, and thou hast compassed me with gladness.

If it has been thus with great saints, we that are weak and poor must not be discouraged if we are sometimes fervent, sometimes cold; because the spirit comes and goes according to the good pleasure of his will.

Wherefore blessed Job saith: Thou visitest him early in the morning, and thou provest him suddenly.

Wherein then can I hope or in what should I trust, but in the sole great mercy of God, and in the sole hope of heavenly grace?

For whether I have with me good men, or devout brethren, or faithful friends, or holy books, or fine treatises, or sweet singing and hymns, all these help little and give me but little relish, when I am forsaken by grace and left in my own poverty.

Then there is no better remedy than patience, and the denial of myself according to the will of God.

I have never found any one so religious and devout as not to have sometimes a withdrawing of grace, or to feel some decrease of fervour.

No saint was ever so highly rapt and illuminated as not to be tempted before or after.

For he is not worthy of the high contemplation

of God who has not been exercised with some tribulation for the sake of God.

For temptation is usually the sign going before the consolation which follows it.

For heavenly consolation is promised to such as have been proved by temptation.

To him that overcometh, saith he, I will give to eat of the tree of life.

But divine consolation is given, that a man may be better able to support adversities.

And temptation follows, that he may not be puffed up because of the good.

The devil sleeps not, neither is the flesh yet dead; therefore thou must not cease to prepare thyself for battle, for on the right hand and on the left are enemies that never rest.

Chapter X.—Of Gratitude for the Grace of God.

Why seekest thou rest, since thou art born to labour?

Dispose thyself to endurance rather than to consolations, and to bear the cross rather than to rejoice.

For who is there amongst people in the world who would not willingly receive consolation and spiritual gladness, if he could always have it?

For spiritual consolations exceed all the delights of the world and pleasures of the flesh.

For all worldly delights are either vain or base; but spiritual delights alone are pleasant and noble, springing from virtues, and infused by God into pure minds.

But these divine consolations no man can always enjoy as long as he would like, because the time of temptation comes not to an end.

But that which very much opposes these heavenly visits is a false liberty of mind and a great confidence in self.

God does well in giving the grace of consolation, but man does ill in not referring it all to God with thanksgiving.

And therefore the gifts of grace cannot flow in us, because we are ungrateful to the giver, and do not pour all back to the fountain head.

For grace is ever due to him who worthily renders thanks for graces; and what is wont to be given to the humble will be taken away from the proud.

I would not have such consolation as would rob me of compunction; nor do I wish for such contemplation as leads to pride.

For not all that is high is holy, nor all that is pleasant good, nor every desire pure, nor all that is dear to us pleasing to God.

I willingly accept of that grace by which I am ever found to be more humble and wary, and become more ready to forsake myself.

He who has been taught by the gift of grace, and instructed by the scourge of its withdrawal,

will not dare to attribute any thing good to himself, but will rather acknowledge himself to be poor and naked.

Give to God what is God's, and take to thyself what is thine; that is, give thanks to God for his grace; but feel that what there is of fault is thine alone, and the fitting punishment of thy fault.

Put thyself always at the lowest, and the highest shall be given thee; for the highest is not valid without the lowest.

The saints highest in the sight of God are least in their own eyes; and the more glorious they are the more humble they are in themselves.

They who are full of truth and heavenly glory, are not desirous of vain glory.

They who are grounded and established in God can by no means be proud.

And they, who attribute whatsoever good they have received to God, seek not glory one from another, but that glory which is from God alone; and they desire above all things that God may be praised in themselves and in all the saints; and this is always their aim.

Be grateful then for the least, and thou shalt be worthy to receive greater things.

Let the least be to thee as very great, and the most contemptible as a special gift.

If thou considerest the dignity of the giver, no gift will seem to thee little or worthless; for that is not small which comes as a gift from the most high God.

Yea, though he give punishment and stripes, it

ought to be acceptable; for whatever he allows to befall us, he always does it for our salvation.

Let him, who desires to retain the grace of God, be grateful for grace when given, and patient when it is withdrawn.

Let him pray that it may return; let him be cautious and humble, lest he lose it.

Chapter XI.—Of the Fewness of the Lovers of the Cross of Jesus.

Jesus has now many lovers of his heavenly kingdom, but few bearers of his cross.

He has many, who are desirous of consolation, but few of tribulation.

He finds many companions of his table, but few of his fasting.

All desire to rejoice with him; few are willing to suffer any thing for him.

Many follow Jesus as far as the breaking of bread, but few to the drinking of the chalice of his passion.

Many reverence his miracles, but few follow the reproach of his cross.

Many love Jesus as long as they meet with no adversity; many praise and bless him as long as they receive some consolations from him.

But if Jesus hide himself and leave them for a little while, they fall either into complaining or into excessive dejection.

But they who love Jesus for Jesus' sake, and not for any comfort of their own, bless him no less in tribulation and anguish of heart than in the greatest consolation.

And if he should never give them consolation, yet would they always praise him, and always give him thanks.

Oh, what might there is in the pure love of Jesus, when unmixed with any self-interest or self-love!

Are not all those to be called hirelings who are always looking for consolations?

Are not they proved to be rather lovers of themselves than of Christ, who always think of their own profit and gain?

Where shall we find a man who is willing to serve God for nought?

Seldom do we find any one so spiritual as to be stripped of all things.

For who can find the man who is truly poor in spirit and stripped of every creature? His value is from afar and from the remotest coasts.

If a man give his whole substance, it is yet nothing.

And if he do great penance, it is yet little.

And if he have laid hold of all knowledge, he is still far off.

And if he have great virtue and a devotion glowing exceedingly, still is there much lacking to him: that is to say, that one thing which is above all necessary to him.

What is that? That, having forsaken all things,

he should forsake himself, and wholly go out of himself, and retain no personal affection.

And when he shall have done all things which he knows should be done, that he should think that he has done nothing.

Let him not make great account of that which may be deemed great, but let him in truth acknowledge himself to be an unprofitable servant; as the Truth has said: When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

Then may he be truly stripped and poor in spirit, and may say with the prophet, I am alone and poor.

Yet no one is indeed richer than such a man, none more powerful, none more free; who knows how to leave himself and all things, and to put himself in the lowest place.

Chapter XII.—Of the Royal Road of the Holy Cross.

To many this seems a hard saying: Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow Jesus.

But much harder will it be to hear that last word: Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.

For they who now gladly hear and follow the word of the cross, will not then feel fear lest they hear of eternal damnation.

This sign, the sign of the cross, will be in heaven, when the Lord shall come to judgment.

Then all the servants of the cross, who in their lifetime have made themselves like to the Crucified, will draw near with great confidence to Christ, the judge.

Why, then, fearest thou to take up thy cross, through which is the way to the kingdom?

In the cross is salvation; in the cross is life; in the cross is protection from enemies.

In the cross is infusion of sweetness from above; in the cross is strength of mind; in the cross is joy of spirit.

In the cross is the height of virtue; in the cross is the perfection of sanctity.

There is no health of the soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross.

Take up then thy cross and follow Jesus, and thou shalt go into life everlasting.

He went before thee, carrying his own cross; and he died for thee upon the cross, that thou mightest also bear thy cross and long to die on the cross.

For, if thou diest with him, thou shalt also live with him; and if thou art partaker of his suffering, thou shalt be also of his glory.

Behold all is in the cross, and in dying lies all; and there is no other way to life and to true inward peace but the way of the holy cross and of daily mortification.

Walk where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and

thou wilt find no higher way above, no safer way below, than the way of the holy cross.

Dispose and order all things according as thou wilt and as thou seest; and thou wilt never find but that thou hast always something to suffer, either willingly or unwillingly, and so wilt thou ever find the cross.

For either thou wilt feel pain of body, or bear in thy soul tribulation of spirit.

Sometimes thou wilt be forsaken of God, at other times thou wilt be tried by thy neighbour; and what is more, thou wilt often be a burthen to thyself.

And yet thou canst not be freed from it or have it lightened by any remedy or solace, but as long as it shall please God it behoves thee bear it.

For God would have thee learn to suffer tribulation without comfort, and to submit thyself wholly to him, and to become more humble by tribulation.

No man has so heartfelt a sense of the passion of Christ as he to whom it has befallen to suffer like things.

The cross therefore is always ready, and everywhere awaits thee.

Thou canst not escape it, whithersoever thou runnest; for whithersoever thou goest, thou carriest thyself with thee, and always shalt thou find thyself.

Turn thyself upwards, turn thyself downwards, turn thyself without, turn thyself within thee; and everywhere thou shalt find the cross.

And everywhere hast thou need of patience, if

thou wouldest have interior peace, and merit a lasting crown.

If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee and bring thee to thy wished-for end; thither, to wit, where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will not be.

If thou carry it unwillingly, thou makest it a burthen to thee and loadest thyself the more; and still thou hast to bear it.

If thou fling away one cross, without doubt thou wilt find another, and perhaps a heavier.

Dost thou think thou canst escape that which no mortal could ever avoid? What saint was ever in the world without his cross and tribulation?

For neither was Jesus Christ our Lord, so long as he lived, one single hour without the pain of his passion: It behoved, saith he, Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead, and so enter into his glory.

And how dost thou seek another way than this royal way, which is the way of the holy cross?

The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom; and dost thou seek for thyself rest and joy?

Thou errest, thou errest, if thou seekest any other thing than to suffer tribulations; for this whole mortal life is full of miseries and all signed around with crosses.

And the higher a man is advanced in spirit, the heavier crosses does he often meet with; because

the pain of his exile increases in proportion to his love.

Yet this man, thus many ways afflicted, is not without some allay of consolation; because he is sensible of the very great reward which accrues to him by bearing his cross.

For whilst he willingly resigns himself to it, all the burthen of tribulation is converted into trust of consolation from God.

And the more the flesh is worn down by affliction, the more the spirit is strengthened by inward grace.

And not unfrequently it gains such strength from its desire of tribulation and adversity, by reason of its loving to be conformed to the cross of Christ, that it would not be without suffering and affliction; because the more it believes itself acceptable to God the more and greater things can it bear for him.

This is not the virtue of man, but the grace of Christ, which can and does effect such great things in frail flesh, that what it naturally ever abhors and flies, even this through fervour of spirit it attempts and loves.

It is not after the way of man to bear the cross, to love the cross, to chastise the body, and bring it under subjection, to fly honours, to be willing to suffer reproaches, to despise self and choose to be despised, to bear all adversities and losses, and to desire no prosperity in this world.

If thou lookest to thyself, thou canst of thyself do nothing of this kind.

But if thou trust in the Lord, strength will be given thee from heaven, and the world and the flesh will be made subject to thy sway.

Nay, thou wilt not even fear thine enemy the devil, if thou art armed with faith and signed with the cross of Christ.

Set thyself, then, like a good and faithful servant of Christ, to bear manfully the cross of thy Lord, who out of his love was crucified for thee.

Prepare thyself to suffer many adversities and divers evils in this miserable life; for so it will be with thee, wherever thou art; and so indeed wilt thou find it, wheresoever thou hidest thyself.

It must be so, and there is no remedy for escaping from the trouble of evils and sorrow but to bear with thyself.

Drink of the chalice of thy Lord lovingly, if thou desirest to be his friend and to have part with him.

Leave consolations to God; let him do with such gifts as best pleases him.

But prepare thou thyself to bear tribulations, and account them the greatest consolations; for the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, even if thou alone couldest suffer them all.

When thou shalt have attained to this, that tribulation becomes sweet and savoury to thee for the love of Christ, then reckon that it is well with thee, for thou hast found paradise upon earth.

As long as suffering seems grievous to thee and thou seekest to fly from it, so long will it be ill with thee, and the tribulation from which thou fliest will everywhere follow thee.

If thou set thyself to what thou oughtest to be, that is, to suffering and to dying, it will quickly be better with thee, and thou wilt find peace.

Although thou mayest have been caught up to the third heaven with Paul, thou art not thereby made secure against suffering any thing thou wouldest not: I, saith Jesus, will show him how great things it behoves him to suffer for my name's sake.

What remains for thee, therefore, is to suffer if thou wilt love Jesus and constantly serve him.

Would thou wert worthy to suffer something for the name of Jesus! How great a glory would await thee, how great joy would be to all the saints of God, and how great edification moreover to thy neighbour!

For all praise patience; but how few are there that desire to suffer!

With good reason oughtest thou willingly to suffer a little for Christ, since many suffer greater things for the world.

Know for certain that thou must lead a dying life; and the more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live to God.

No man is fit to comprehend heavenly things who has not resigned himself to bear adversities for Christ.

Nothing is more acceptable to God, nothing

more wholesome for thee in this world, than to suffer willingly for Christ.

And if thou hadst to choose, thou shouldest prefer to suffer adversities for Christ rather than to be refreshed with many consolations; because thou wouldest be more like to Christ and more conformed to all the saints.

For our merit, and the advancement of our state, consist not in many sweetnesses and consolations, but rather in bearing great afflictions and tribulations.

For surely if there had been anything better, and more useful to the salvation of man, than suffering, Christ would certainly have shown it by word and example.

For he manifestly exhorts both the disciples who were following him, and all that desire to follow him, to bear the cross, saying: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.

Having, then, read and searched out all, be this our last conclusion, that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God.

BOOK III.

OF INTERIOR CONSOLATION.

BOOK III.

Chapter I.—Of the Speaking of Christ Inwardly to the Faithful Soul.

I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me.

Blessed is that soul which hears the Lord speaking within her, and from his mouth receives the word of consolation.

Blessed the ears which receive the instillings of the divine whisper, and take no notice of the whisperings of the world.

Blessed indeed are the ears which hearken not to the voice which sounds without, but to the truth teaching within.

Blessed the eyes which are closed to outward things, but are fixed on things within.

Blessed are they who enter into the things that are within, and endeavour to prepare themselves more and more by daily exercises for attaining to heavenly secrets.

Blessed are they who seek to give their whole time to God, and who rid themselves of every hindrance from the world.

Take heed to these things, O my soul, and shut the door of thy senses, that thou mayest hear what the Lord thy God speaks within thee.

Thus saith thy beloved: I am thy salvation, thy peace, and thy life; abide in me, and thou shalt find peace.

Let all transitory things go their way, seek thou the things eternal.

What are all temporal things but deceitful? and what will all things created avail thee, if thou be forsaken by the Creator?

Renounce thou, then, all earthly things, and make thyself pleasing to thy Creator and faithful to him, that so thou mayest lay hold on true happiness.

Chapter II.—That Truth Speaks within us without Noise of Words.

Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. I am thy servant; give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies.

Incline my heart to the words of thy mouth; let thy speech distil as the dew.

The children of Israel said to Moses, of old time: Speak thou to us, and we will hear; let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.

Not thus, O Lord, not thus do I pray; but rather with Samuel the prophet I humbly and longingly entreat: Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.

Let not Moses nor any prophet speak to me;

but speak thou rather, O Lord God, who art the inspirer and enlightener of all the prophets; for thou alone without them canst perfectly instruct me, but they without thee will avail nothing.

They may indeed sound forth words, but they do not add to them the spirit.

They speak well; but, if thou be silent, they do not set the heart on fire.

They deliver the letter, but thou openest the sense.

They bring forth the mysteries, but thou bringest out the sense of the things signified.

They proclaim the commandments, but thou enablest us to fulfil them.

They show the way, but thou givest strength to walk in it.

They work only outwardly, but thou instructest and enlightenest the heart.

They water outwardly, but thou givest the increase.

They cry out with words, but thou givest understanding to the hearing.

Let not then Moses speak to me, but thou, O Lord God, eternal truth; lest perchance I die and be made without fruit, if I be only outwardly admonished and not enkindled within;

Lest the word which I have heard and not fulfilled, known and not loved, believed and not kept, rise up in judgment against me.

Speak then, Lord, for thy servant heareth; for thou hast the words of eternal life.

Speak to me for some comfort to my soul, and for the amendment of my whole life, and to thy praise and glory and everlasting honour.

Chapter III.—That the Words of God are to be Heard with Humility, and that Many weigh them not.

Hear my words, my son; words most sweet, exceeding all the learning of the philosophers and of the wise men of this world.

My words are spirit and life, and not to be weighed by man's understanding.

They are not to be perverted for a vain self-conceit, but are to be heard in silence, and received with all humility and great affection.

And I said: Blessed is the man, whom thou, O Lord, hast instructed and taught out of thy law, that thou mayest give him rest from the evil days, and that he may not be desolate upon the earth.

I, saith the Lord, have taught the prophets from the beginning, and even till now I cease not to speak to all; but many are deaf to my voice, and hard.

Most men give ear more gladly to the world than to God, and more readily follow the desires of the flesh than the good pleasure of God.

The world promises things temporal and of small value, and is served with great eagerness: I pro-

mise things most excellent and everlasting, and the hearts of men are listless.

Who is there that serves and obeys me in all things with that great care with which the world and its lords are served? Be thou ashamed, O Sidon, saith the sea.

And if thou ask the reason, hear why.

For scanty preferment men run a great way; for eternal life many will scarce move their foot once from the ground.

A pitiful gain is sought after; for one piece of money there is sometimes shameful wrangling; men do not shrink from toiling day and night for a trifle or some slight promise.

But, oh shame! for the good which never changes, for the reward beyond all price, for the highest honour and the glory which has no end, they are too sluggish to take the least pains.

Blush, then, thou slothful servant, who art ever complaining, because they are more ready to labour for death than thou art for life.

They rejoice more in running after vanity than thou after truth.

They, in truth, are oft times disappointed of their hope; but my promise deceives no man, nor sends him away empty who trusts in me.

What I have promised, I will give; what I have said, I will fulfil; if only a man continue to the end faithful in my love.

I am the rewarder of all the good, and keenly test all the devout.

Write my words in thy heart, and ponder them

diligently; for they will be very necessary in the time of temptation.

What thou understandest not when thou readest, that thou shalt know in the day of visitation.

In two ways I am wont to visit my elect, namely, by trials and by consolation.

And day by day I read them two lessons; one by rebuking their vices, the other by exhorting them to the increase of virtues.

He who has my words and slights them, has that which shall judge him at the last day.

A PRAYER
TO IMPLORE THE GRACE OF DEVOTION.

O Lord my God, thou art all my good; and who am I, that I should presume to speak to thee?

I am thy least, thy poorest servant, and a wretched little worm, poorer far and more contemptible than I know or dare express.

Yet remember, O Lord, that I am nothing, I have nothing, and can do nothing.

Thou alone art good, just, and holy; thou canst do all things; thou givest all things; thou fillest all things, leaving only the sinner empty.

Remember thy mercies and fill my heart with thy grace, thou who willest not that thy works should be in vain.

How can I bear myself in this wretched life, unless thou givest me strength by thy mercy and grace?

Turn not thy face from me, delay not thy visi-

tation, withdraw not thy comfort; lest my soul become as earth without water unto thee.

O Lord, teach me to do thy will, teach me to walk worthily and humbly before thee; for thou art my wisdom, who knowest me in truth, and who knewest me before the world was made, and before I was born in the world.

Chapter IV.—That We Ought to Walk in Truth and Humility before God.

Son, walk before me in truth, and always seek me in the singleness of thy heart.

He who walks before me in truth shall be secured from evil assaults, and truth shall make him free from deceivers and from the malice of the wicked.

If truth shall make thee free, thou shalt indeed be free, and wilt not heed the vain words of men.

Lord, this is true; as thou sayest, so I pray, let it be done with me. Let thy truth teach me, let it be my guard, and keep me till I come to my blessed end.

Let it set me free from every evil affection and from all inordinate love, and I shall walk with thee in great freedom of heart.

I will teach thee, saith the Truth, what things are right and pleasing in my sight.

Think on thy sins with great displeasure and

grief; and never esteem thyself to be anything because of thy good works.

Thou art indeed a sinner, subject to and entangled with many passions.

Of thyself thou always tendest to nothing, thou soon fallest, art soon overcome, soon disturbed, soon utterly unnerved.

Thou hast not anything in which thou canst glory, but many things for which thou oughtest to hold thyself of small repute; for thou art much weaker than thou art able to comprehend.

Let nothing, then, of all thou doest seem much to thee.

Let nothing appear great, nothing precious or admirable, nothing worthy of esteem, nothing high, nothing truly praiseworthy or desirable, but what is eternal.

Let the eternal Truth please thee above all things, let thine own utter vileness ever displease thee.

Fear nothing so much, blame and shun nothing so much, as thy vices and sins, which ought to displease thee more than any loss of goods.

Some men walk not sincerely before me; but, induced by a certain curiosity and pride, desire to know my secret things and to understand the high things of God, neglecting themselves and their own salvation.

These often fall into great temptations and sins through their pride and curiosity, since I resist them.

Fear the judgments of God, tremble before the anger of the Almighty; presume not, however, to inquire closely into the works of the Most High, but search into thine own iniquities, in how many things thou hast offended, and how much good thou hast neglected.

Some carry their devotion in their books only, some in pictures, and some in outward signs and figures.

Some have me on their lips, but little in their heart.

There are others who, enlightened in their understanding and purified in their affection, always pant after things eternal, hear of earthly things with reluctance, and grieve to be subject to the necessities of nature; and these feel what the spirit of truth speaks in them.

For it teaches them to despise the things of the earth and to love heavenly things; to disregard the world, and all the day and night to long for heaven.

Chapter V.—Of the Wonderful Effect of Divine Love.

I bless thee, heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, because thou hast vouchsafed to be mindful of so poor a wretch as I.

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort,

I give thanks to thee, who art sometimes pleased to refresh with thy consolation me who am unworthy of any consolation.

I bless thee and glorify thee evermore, together with thy only-begotten Son and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, to all eternity.

Come then, Lord God, holy one that lovest me! for when thou shalt come into my heart, all that is within me will leap with joy.

Thou art my glory and the rejoicing of my heart.

Thou art my hope and my refuge in the day of my tribulation.

But, because I am as yet weak in love and imperfect in virtue, therefore do I stand in need of being strengthened and comforted by thee. Wherefore visit me again and again; and instruct me by all holy discipline.

Free me from evil passions and heal my heart of all inordinate affections; that being inwardly healed and thoroughly cleansed, I may become fit to love, strong to suffer, constant to persevere.

Love is a great thing, a great good indeed, which alone makes light all that is burdensome, and bears with even mind all that is uneven.

For it carries a burthen without being burthened; and it makes all that which is bitter sweet and savoury.

The love of Jesus is noble, and spurs us on to do great things, and excites us to desire always things more perfect.

Love desires to have its abode above, and not to be kept back by things below.

Love desires to be at liberty and estranged from all worldly affection, lest its inner view be hindered, lest it suffer itself to be entangled through some temporal interest, or give way through mishap.

Nothing is sweeter than love ; nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing broader, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven and in earth ; for love is born of God, and can rest only in God above all things created.

The lover flies, runs, and rejoices ; he is free and not held.

He gives all for all and has all in all, because he rests in one supreme above all, from whom all good flows and proceeds.

He looks not at the gifts, but turns himself above all goods to the giver.

Love often knows no measure, but warmly glows above all measure.

Love feels no burthen, regards not labours, would willingly do more than it is able, pleads not impossibility, because it feels sure that it can and may do all things.

It is able, therefore, to do all things ; and it makes good many deficiencies, and frees many things for being carried out, where he who loves not faints and lies down.

Love watches, and sleeping slumbers not ; weary, is not tired ; straitened, is not con-

strained; frightened, is not disturbed; but, like a living flame and a burning torch, it bursts forth upwards and safely overpasses all.

Whosoever loves knows the cry of this voice.

A loud cry in the ears of God is that ardent affection of the soul which says: My God, my love, thou art all mine and I am all thine.

Enlarge me in thy love, that I may learn to taste with the inner mouth of the heart how sweet it is to love, and to be dissolved and swim in a sea of love.

Let me be possessed by love, going above myself through excess of fervour and awe.

Let me sing the song of love, let me follow thee, my beloved, on high, let my soul lose herself in thy praises, exulting in love.

Let me love thee more than myself, and myself only for thee, and all in thee who truly love thee, as the law of love which shines forth from thee commands.

Love is swift, sincere, pious, pleasant, and delightful; strong, patient, faithful, prudent, long-suffering, manly, and never seeking itself; for where a man seeks himself, there he falls from love.

Love is circumspect, humble, and upright; not soft, not light, not intent upon vain things; sober, chaste, steadfast, quiet, and guarded in all its senses.

Love is submissive and obedient to superiors; mean and contemptible in its own eyes; devout

and ever giving thanks to God, always trusting and hoping in him, even when it tastes not the relish of God's sweetness; for there is no living in love without pain.

Whosoever is not ready to suffer all things, and to stand resigned to the will of the beloved, is not worthy to be called a lover.

He who loves must willingly embrace all that is hard and bitter, for the sake of the beloved, and must never suffer himself to be turned away from him by adverse hap.

Chapter VI.—Of the Proof of a True Lover.

Son, thou art not as yet a valiant and prudent lover.

Why, Lord?

Because on a little opposition thou fallest off from what thou hast begun, and thou too greedily seekest after consolation.

A valiant lover stands his ground in temptations, and yields not to the crafty persuasions of the enemy.

As I please him in prosperity, so I displease him not in adversity.

A prudent lover considers not so much the gift of the lover as the love of the giver.

He looks more at the good-will than the value, and prizes his beloved above all his gifts.

A generous lover rests not in the gift, but in me above every gift.

All is not therefore lost, if sometimes thou hast not that sense of devotion towards me or my saints which thou wouldest wish to have.

That good and sweet affection, of which thou sometimes hast a sense, is the effect of present grace, and as it were a foretaste of the heavenly country.

But thou must not lean too much upon it, because it comes and goes.

But to fight against the evil motions of the mind as they arise, and to despise the suggestion of the devil, is a sign of virtue and of great merit.

Let not therefore strange fancies trouble thee, on whatever subject they may thrust themselves upon thee.

Keep thy resolution firm, and thy intention upright towards God.

Neither is it an illusion, that thou art sometimes rapt into an ecstasy and presently returnest to the accustomed frivolities of thy heart.

For these thou dost unwillingly suffer rather than do ; and as long as they displease thee, and thou resistest them, it is merit and not loss.

Know that the old enemy strives by all means to hinder thy desire after good, and to divert thee from every devout exercise ; to wit, from the veneration of the saints, from the pious meditation of my passion, from the profitable remembrance of thy sins, from keeping a guard upon thine own

heart, and from a firm purpose of advancing in virtue.

He suggests many evil thoughts, that he may weary and frighten thee; that he may withdraw thee from prayer and from holy reading.

He cannot abide humble confession; and, if he could, he would cause thee to cease from communion.

Believe him not, take no heed of him even though he again and again spread for thee the snares of his deceit.

Charge him with it when he suggests wicked and unclean things, and say to him:

Begone, unclean spirit; be ashamed, miserable wretch; foul indeed art thou to suggest such things as these to my hearing.

Depart from me, thou wicked tempter; thou shalt have no part in me; but Jesus will be with me as a valiant warrior, and thou shalt stand confounded.

I had rather die and undergo all torment than consent to thee.

Hold thy peace and be silent, I will hear thee no longer, although thou mayest try to trouble me yet more.

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

Though an host of men should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear. The Lord is my helper and my redeemer.

Fight like a good soldier; and if sometimes

thou fallest through frailty, rise up again with greater strength than before, trusting in my fuller grace; and guard thee much beforehand against vain complacency and pride.

Through this many are led into error, and sometimes fall into blindness well-nigh incurable.

Let this fall of the proud, who foolishly rely on their own strength, serve thee as a warning and keep thee always humble.

Chapter VII.—Of Concealing Grace in the Keeping of Humility.

Son, it is more profitable for thee and safer to hide the grace of devotion, and not to be elevated with it, nor to speak much of it, nor to consider it much; but rather to despise thyself the more, and to be afraid of it as being given to one unworthy.

Thou must not cling too closely to this affection, which may be quickly changed into the contrary.

When thou hast grace, think with thyself how miserable and poor thou art wont to be without grace.

Nor does advancement in the spiritual life consist so much in having the grace of consolation, as in bearing the withdrawal of it with humility, resignation, and patience; so as not to grow remiss in the earnestness of thy prayer at that time, nor suffer thine other wonted works to slip altogether away.

But that thou willingly do what lies in thee ac-

cording to the best of thy ability and understanding, and take care not to neglect thyself wholly through the dryness or anxiety of mind which thou feelest.

For there are many who, when things succeed not well with them, presently grow impatient or slothful.

For the way of man is not always in his own power; but it belongs to God to give and to comfort when he wills, and as much as he wills, and whom he wills, as it shall please him and no more.

Some, wanting in caution, have ruined themselves by reason of the grace of devotion; because they were desirous of doing more than they could, not weighing well the measure of their own littleness, but following rather the inclinations of the heart than the dictates of reason.

And because they presumptuously undertook greater things than were pleasing to God, therefore they quickly lost grace.

They became needy, and were left wretched, who had built themselves a nest in heaven, to the end that, being thus humbled and impoverished, they might learn not to soar on their own wings, but to cherish hope under mine.

Those, who are as yet new and inexperienced in the way of the Lord, may be easily deceived and brought to ruin if they rule not themselves by the counsel of the discreet.

But if they will rather follow their own judgment than believe others who have experience, their

end will be full of peril, that is if they still refuse to be withdrawn from their own conceits.

They who are wise in their own eyes seldom humbly suffer themselves to be ruled by others.

It is better to have little knowledge with humility and small understanding, than greater treasures of learning with a vain self-conceit.

It is better for thee to have little than much, which may puff thee up with pride.

He is not so discreet as he ought to be who gives himself up wholly to gladness, forgetting his former poverty, and the chaste fear of God which fears to lose the grace which is offered.

Nor has his wisdom enough of valour, who in a time of adversity and any distress bears himself with too much despair, and thinks and feels of me with less confidence than he ought.

He who would fain be too secure in time of peace will often be found too much dejected and timid in time of war.

If thou couldest always remain humble and little in thine own eyes, and keep thy spirit in due order and subjection, thou wouldest not fall so easily into danger and stumbling.

It is a good counsel, that, when thou hast received the spirit of fervour, thou shouldest meditate how it will be with thee when that light shall leave thee.

When this shall happen, remember that the light may return again which, for thy warning and my glory, I have withdrawn for a time.

Such a trial is oftentimes more profitable than if thou wert always to have prosperity according to thy will.

For the merits of a man are not to be estimated by his having many visions or consolations, nor by his being skilled in Scripture, nor by his being set in a higher place; but by his being grounded in true humility and full of divine charity, by his always seeking purely and entirely the honour of God, by his esteeming himself as nothing, and sincerely despising himself, and being better pleased to be despised and humiliated by others than to be honoured by them.

Chapter VIII.—Of the Lowly Esteem of Self in the Sight of God.

I will speak to my Lord, though I am but dust and ashes.

If I think anything better of myself, behold, thou standest against me, and my sins bear true witness, and I cannot gainsay it.

But if I humble myself and bring myself to nothing, and give up all manner of esteem of myself, and account myself to be, as I am, mere dust, thy grace will be gentle to me, and thy light will draw nigh to my heart; and all self-esteem, how small soever, will be sunk in the depth of my own nothingness, and will there lose itself for ever.

There thou showest me to myself, what I am, what I have been, and what I have become; for I am nothing, and I knew it not.

If I am left to myself, behold, I am nothing and all weakness; but if thou shouldest suddenly look upon me, I presently become strong and am filled with a new joy.

And it is very wonderful that I am so quickly raised up, and so graciously embraced by thee, I, who by my own weight am always sinking to the bottom.

It is thy love that effects this, freely preventing me and assisting me in so many necessities; preserving me also from grievous dangers, and as I may truly say, delivering me from innumerable evils.

For by an evil loving of myself, I lost myself; and by seeking thee alone and purely loving thee, I found both myself and thee; and by this love I have more profoundly brought myself unto nothing.

Because thou, O most sweet, dealest with me above all desert, and above all that I dare hope or ask for.

Blessed be thou, my God; for though I am unworthy of all good, yet thy generosity and infinite goodness never cease to do good even to those who are ungrateful and who are turned away from thee.

Turn us unto thee, that we may be thankful, humble, and devout; for thou art our salvation, our courage and our strength.

Chapter IX.—That all Things are to be Referred to God as to the Furthest End.

Son, I must be thy highest and thy last end, if thou desirest to be truly happy.

By this intention shall thy affection be purified, which too often is wrongly bent down upon thyself and things created.

For if in anything thou seekest thyself, thou presently witherest away within thyself and growest dry.

Refer therefore all things to me as their first beginning, for it is I that have given all.

Consider everything as flowing from the highest good; and therefore they must all be referred to me as to their source.

Out of me both little and great, rich and poor, draw living water as out of a living fountain; and they who freely and willingly serve me, shall receive grace for grace.

But he who would glory in anything else besides me, or delight in any good of his own choosing, shall not be established in true joy nor enlarged in his heart, but shall be in manifold ways entangled and brought to straits.

Therefore thou must not ascribe anything good

to thyself, nor attribute virtue to any man; but give all to God, without whom man has nothing.

I have given all; I will have all returned to me again; and I very strictly require thanks for all that I give.

This is that truth, by which all vain glory is put to flight.

And if heavenly grace and true love enter, there will be no envy nor narrowness of heart, nor will self-love keep its hold.

For divine love overcomes all things, and expands all the powers of the soul.

If thou art truly wise, thou wilt rejoice in me alone, thou wilt hope in me alone; for none is good but God only, who is to be praised above all and to be blessed in all things.

Chapter X.—That it is Sweet to Serve God, Despising the World.

Now will I speak again, O Lord, and will not keep silence; I will say in the hearing of my God, my Lord and my King who is on high:

Oh, how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!

But what art thou to those who love thee? what to those who serve thee with their whole heart?

Unspeakable indeed is the sweetness of that vision of thee which thou bestowest on those who love thee.

In this hast thou signally shown me the sweetness of thy love, that when I was not thou didst make me; and when I was wandering far from thee thou didst bring me back to serve thee, and didst bid me love thee.

O fount of ever-flowing love, what shall I say of thee?

How can I forget thee, who hast deigned to think of me, even after I had wasted away and was lost?

Thou hast shown mercy beyond all hope to thy servant, and beyond all my desert bestowed thy grace and friendship on me.

What return shall I make to thee for this grace? for it is not granted to all to forsake all things, to renounce the world and take on them the monastic life.

Can it be much to serve thee, whom every creature is bound to serve?

It ought not to seem much to me to serve thee; but this rather is to me great and wonderful, that thou dost deign to receive into thy service one so poor and unworthy, and to make him one of thy chosen servants.

Behold, all things are thine; all I have, and all wherewith I serve thee.

And yet, contrariwise, thou servest me rather than I thee.

Lo, heaven and earth, which thou hast created

for the service of man, are at thy call, and day by day do whatever thou hast commanded them.

And this is yet but little, for thou hast also appointed the angels for the service of man.

Yet more than all this thou thyself hast vouchsafed to serve man, and hast promised that thou wilt give him thyself.

What shall I give thee for so many thousand favours? Would that I could serve thee all the days of my life!

Would that I were able, if it were but for one day, to serve thee worthily!

Verily thou art worthy of all service, of all honour and eternal praise.

Verily thou art my Lord, and I am thy poor servant, who am bound with all my strength to serve thee and ought never to find thy praises wearisome.

This is my will, this is my desire; and whatever is wanting to me do thou vouchsafe to supply.

It is a great honour, a great glory to serve thee, and to despise all things for thee.

For they who willingly subject themselves to thy most holy service will have great grace.

They will find the most sweet comfort of the Holy Spirit, who for the love of thee have cast away all carnal delights.

They will gain great freedom of mind, who for thy name's sake enter upon the narrow way and lay aside all worldly care.

O pleasant and delightful service of God, by which a man is made truly free and holy.

O sacred state of religious bondage, which makes men equal to angels, to be reconciled with God, terrible to the devils, and a praise to all the faithful.

O service, worthy to be embraced and ever to be chosen, which earns for us the supreme good, and procures a joy that will abide without end.

Chapter XI.—That the Desires of the Heart are to be Examined and Moderated.

Son, thou hast many things still to learn, which thou hast not yet well learnt.

What are these things, Lord?

That thou shouldest conform thy desire in all things to my good pleasure; and that thou be not a lover of thyself, but earnestly zealous that my will may be done.

Desires often inflame thee and violently hurry thee on: but ponder well whether it be for my honour or thine own interest that thou art rather moved.

If I am thy motive, thou wilt be well contented with whatsoever I shall ordain; but if there lurk in

thee anything of self-seeking, behold it is this that hinders thee and weighs thee down.

Take heed, then, thou lean not too much on any desire thou hast conceived beforehand, without consulting me; lest perhaps thou afterwards repent, or be displeased with that which before pleased thee, and which thou didst zealously desire as the best.

For as not every inclination, which appears good, is presently to be followed; so neither is every feeling of repugnance at first sight to be rejected.

Even in good desires and inclinations it is well for thee to check thyself at times; lest by too much eagerness thou run into distraction of mind, lest thou create scandal to others by thy lack of discipline, or lest by the opposition of others thou be suddenly disturbed and fall.

Sometimes it behoves thee to use violence, and manfully resist the sensitive appetite, nor to regard what the flesh likes and what it dislikes; but rather to make it thy care that, even though unwilling, it may become subject to the spirit.

And so long must it be chastised and kept under servitude, until it readily obey in all things, and learn to be content with a little, to be pleased with what is simple, and not to murmur at any inconvenience.

Chapter XII.—Of Learning Patience and of Wrestling against Carnal Desires.

O Lord God, patience, as I see, is very necessary for me; for this life is exposed to many contradictions.

For whatever plan I shall have formed for my peace, my life cannot be without war and sorrow.

So is it, my son; yet I would not have thee seek for such a peace as is without temptations, or to meet with no contradictions; but even then to think that thou hast found peace, when thou shalt be exercised with divers tribulations and tried in many adversities.

If thou shalt say that thou canst not suffer much, how, then, wilt thou endure the fire of purgatory?

Of two evils we ought always to choose the lesser.

That thou mayest therefore escape eternal punishments to come, try to endure present evils with patience for the sake of God.

Dost thou think the men of this world suffer little or nothing? Thou wilt not find it so, though thou shouldest seek out the most pampered.

But, thou sayest, they have many delights and follow their own wills, and therefore make small account of their tribulations.

Be it so, that they have all they desire; how long dost thou think that this will last?

Behold, they who abound in this world shall vanish away as smoke, and there shall be no remembrance of past joys.

Nay, even whilst they are living, they rest not in them without bitterness, irksomeness and fear.

For the same thing in which they conceive delight, often brings upon them in return a punishment of sorrow.

It is but just that they who inordinately seek and follow after pleasures, should not satisfy them to the full without confusion and bitterness.

Oh, how short, how deceitful, how inordinate and base are all these pleasures!

Yet through sottishness and blindness men understand this not; but, like dumb beasts, for a small pleasure in this corruptible life they run upon the death of the soul.

Thou, therefore, my son, go not after thy lusts, and turn away from thine own will.

Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee thy heart's desire.

For if thou wishest to have true delights and to receive more abundant consolation from me, behold, in the contempt of all worldly things and in the cutting off of all low pleasures shalt thou be blessed, and abundant consolation be restored to thee.

And the more thou withdrawest thyself from all solace in things created, the sweeter and the stronger consolations wilt thou find in me.

But at first thou shalt not attain to these without some sorrow and labour of conflict.

Inbred habit will stand in the way, but by a better habit it shall be overcome.

The flesh will murmur, but by the fervour of the spirit it shall be reined in.

The old serpent will tempt thee and harass thee, but by prayer he shall be put to flight; moreover, by useful labour a main approach of his will be blocked up.

Chapter XIII.—Of the Submission of One under Obedience after the Example of Jesus Christ.

Son, he who strives to withdraw himself from obedience, withdraws himself from grace; and he who seeks his own, loses those things which are in common.

If a man does not freely and willingly submit himself to his superior, it is a sign that his flesh is not as yet perfectly obedient to him, but that it oftentimes rebels and murmurs.

Learn then to submit thyself readily to thy superior, if thou choosest to subdue thine own flesh.

For the enemy without is sooner overcome if the inner man be not laid waste.

There is not a more troublesome or worse enemy to the soul than thou art to thyself, when not at peace with the spirit.

Thou must in good earnest take to thee a true contempt of thyself if thou wishest to prevail over flesh and blood.

Because thou hast as yet too inordinate a love for thyself, therefore art thou afraid to resign thyself wholly to the will of others.

But what great matter is it, if thou, who art dust and nothing, submit thyself to man for the sake of God, when I, the Almighty and the Most High, who created all things out of nothing, for thy sake humbly subjected myself to man?

I became the most humble and the lowest of all that thou mightest overcome thy pride by my humility.

Learn to obey, O dust; learn to humble thyself, O earth and clay, and to bow thyself down beneath the feet of all.

Learn to break thine own will, and to yield thyself up to all subjection.

Be zealous against thyself; suffer not swelling pride to live in thee, but show thyself so submissive and so little that all may trample on thee and tread thee under their feet as the mire of the streets.

What hast thou, vain man, to complain of?

What answer canst thou make, O vile sinner, to those that reproach thee, thou who hast so often offended God, and many times deserved hell?

But mine eye has spared thee, because thy soul was precious in my sight; that thou mightest know my love and live on ever grateful for my favours,

and that thou mightest give thyself continually to true subjection and humility, and bear with patience that all despise thee.

Chapter XIV.—Of Considering the Secret Judgments of God, lest We be Puffed up with Our Own Good Works.

Thou thunderest forth over my head thy judgments, O Lord, and thou shakest all my bones with fear and trembling, and my soul is terrified exceedingly.

I stand amazed and consider: for the heavens are not pure in thy sight.

If in the angels thou hast found sin and hast not spared them, what will become of me?

Stars have fallen from heaven; and I, who am but dust, how can I presume?

They whose works seemed worthy to be praised, have fallen to the very lowest; and those who were wont to feed upon the bread of angels, I have seen delighted with the husks of swine.

There is, then, no sanctity, if thou, O Lord, withdraw thy hand.

No wisdom profits if thou cease to govern.

No strength avails if thou cease to uphold.

No chastity is secure if thou protect it not.

No guard that we can keep upon ourselves will profit us, if thy sacred watch be not over us.

For if thou leave us, we sink and perish; but if thou visit us we are raised up and live.

For we are unstable indeed, but by thee we are strengthened; we are lukewarm, but by thee we are set on fire.

Oh, how humbly and lowly ought I to think of myself! How little ought I to esteem whatever good I may seem to have!

Oh, how low ought I to cast myself down under thine unfathomable judgments, O Lord, where I find myself to be nothing else but nothing, yea, nothing!

O weight immense; O sea impassable, where I find nothing about myself but that I am wholly nothing!

Where, then, can boasting find a lurking place? where confidence in fancied virtue?

All vain glorying is swallowed up in the depth of thy judgments above me.

What is all flesh in thy sight?

Shall the clay glory against him who formed it?

How can he be elated with vain talk whose heart in truth is subjected to God?

All the world will not move him to pride whom truth has subjected to itself.

Neither will he, who has made his whole hope strong in God, be moved with the tongues of all that praise him.

For, behold, all they also who speak are naught; for they shall pass away with the sound of their words; but the truth of the Lord remaineth for ever.

Chapter XV.—What Position we are to Take, and what We are to Say when We Desire Any Thing.

Son, in every thing say thus: Lord, if it be pleasing to thee, so let this be done.

Lord, if it be to thine honour, let this be done in thy name.

Lord, if thou seest that this is expedient for me, and approvest it as profitable, then give me to use it to thine honour.

But if thou knowest that it will be hurtful to me, and not expedient for the salvation of my soul, take away from me such a desire.

For not every desire is from the Holy Ghost, even though it seem to a man right and good.

It is hard to judge truly whether it be a good or an evil spirit which urges thee on to desire this or that, or whether thou art not moved by thine own spirit.

Many have been deceived in the end who at first seemed to be led by a good spirit.

Whatsoever therefore presents itself to thy mind as to be desired, see that it be always with the fear of God and humility of heart that thou desire or ask for it.

And above all thou oughtest, with a resignation of thyself, to commit all to me, and to say:

Lord, thou knowest in what way it is best; let this or that be done as thou wilt.

Give what thou wilt, and as much as thou wilt, and when thou wilt.

Do with me as thou knowest, and as best pleases thee, and is most for thine honour.

Put me where thou wilt, and do with me in all things according to thy will.

I am in thy hand; twist me about and turn me back again.

Lo, I am thy servant, prepared for all things; for I do not desire to live to myself, but to thee; O that it were worthily and perfectly.

A PRAYER

FOR FULFILLING THE GOOD PLEASURE OF GOD.

GRANT me thy grace, most gentle Jesus, that it may be with me, and work with me, and continue with me to the end.

Grant me always to will and desire that which is the more acceptable, and the more perfectly pleasing to thee.

Let thy will be mine, and let my will always follow thine and perfectly accord with it.

Let me always will or not will the same with thee; and let me be unable to will or not will otherwise than as thou willest or willest not.

Grant that I may die to all things which are in the world; and that for thy sake I may love to be despised and to be unknown in this world.

Grant that I may rest in thee above all things desired, and give my heart peace in thee.

Thou art the true peace of the heart, thou its only rest; out of thee all things are hard and unrestful.

In this peace, and for this very end, that is in thee, the one sovereign eternal good, I will lay me down and take my rest. Amen.

Chapter XVI.—That True Comfort is to be Sought in God Alone.

Whatsoever I can desire or imagine for my solace, I look not for here, but hereafter.

For if I alone should have all the comforts of this world and could enjoy all its delights, it is certain they could not last long.

Wherefore thou canst not, O my soul, be fully comforted nor have perfect refreshment save in God, the comforter of the poor and the upraiser of the humble.

Wait a little while, O my soul, wait for the divine promise, and thou wilt have in heaven plenteousness of all that is good.

If thou desirest too inordinately these present things, thou wilt lose those which are eternal and heavenly.

Let temporal things serve thy use, but let the eternal be still thy desire.

Thou canst not be fully satisfied with any tem-

poral good, because thou wast not created for the enjoyment of such things.

Although thou shouldest have all created goods, yet this could not make thee happy and blessed; but in God, who created all things, all thy blessedness and thy happiness consist.

Not such as is seen or praised by the foolish lovers of this world; but such as good and faithful followers of Christ look for, and of which they who are spiritual and clean of heart, whose conversation is in heaven, have sometimes a foretaste.

All human solace is vain and shortlived.

Blessed and true is that solace which is inwardly received from the truth.

A devout man bears about with him everywhere Jesus his comforter; and says to him, Be with me, Lord Jesus, in every place and time.

Let this be my consolation, to be willing to do without any human solace.

And if thy consolation be withdrawn, let thy will and thy just trial be to me as the greatest solace.

For thou wilt not be angry always; neither wilt thou threaten for ever.

Chapter XVII.—That we Ought to Place all our Care upon God.

Son, suffer me to do with thee what I will; I know what is meet for thee.

Thou thinkest as man; thou judgest in many things as human affection suggests.

Lord, what thou sayest is true; thy care for me is greater than all the care I can take of myself.

For he stands at too great a hazard who casts not his whole care on thee.

Lord, provided that my will remain right and firm towards thee, do with me whatsoever it shall please thee.

For whatever thou shalt do by me, cannot be other than good.

If thou wilt have me to be in darkness, be thou blessed; and if thou wilt have me to be in light, blessed be thou again; if thou vouchsafest to comfort me, be thou blessed; and if it be thy will that I should be afflicted, be thou always equally blessed.

Son, thus must thou stand if thou desirest to walk with me.

Thou must be as ready to suffer as to rejoice,

thou must be as willing to be poor and needy as to be full and rich.

Lord, I will suffer willingly for thee whatsoever thou art pleased should befall me.

I am willing to receive with indifference from thy hand good and evil, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow; and to give thee thanks for all that happens to me.

Keep me from all sin, and I will fear neither death nor hell.

So only thou cast me not off for ever, nor blot me out of the book of life; no tribulation that befalls me will hurt me.

Chapter XVIII.—That Temporal Miseries are to be Borne with Patience, after the Example of Christ.

Son, I came down from heaven for thy salvation; I took upon me thy miseries, not of necessity, but moved thereto by charity, that thou mightest learn patience and mightest bear without repining the miseries of this life.

For from the hour of my birth till my death on the cross never was I without endurance of suffering.

Great was the want of temporal things that I endured, many the complaints that I often heard against me; I meekly bore confusion and re-

proaches; for my benefits I received ingratitude, for my miracles blasphemies, for my doctrine rebukes.

Lord, because thou wast patient in thy lifetime, in this chiefly fulfilling the commandment of thy Father, it is fitting that I, a pitiful sinner, should, according to thy will take all with patience, and should, as long as thou pleasest, support the burthen of this corruptible life in order to my salvation.

For though this present life is felt to be burthensome, yet it is now become through thy grace exceeding meritorious, and by thy example and the footsteps of thy saints more supportable to the weak, and more bright.

It is also much more full of consolation than it was formerly under the old law, while the gate of heaven remained shut and the way also to heaven seemed more obscure; when so few cared to seek the kingdom of heaven.

And not even they who were then just and of the saved, could enter into thy heavenly kingdom before thy passion and the debt of thy sacred death.

Oh, how great thanks am I bound to return to thee for having vouchsafed to show to me and all the faithful the right and good way to thine everlasting kingdom!

For thy life is our life; and by holy patience we walk on to thee, who art our crown.

If thou hadst not gone before and taught us, who would care to follow?

Alas, how many would have stayed afar off and a

great way behind if they had not had before their eyes thine excelling example!

Behold, we are still lukewarm, though we have heard of thy so many miracles and teachings; what should we be if we had not so great light whereby to follow thee?

Chapter XIX.—Of Supporting Injuries, and who is Proved to be Truly Patient.

What is that thou sayest, my son? Cease to complain, considering my passion and that of other saints.

Thou hast not yet resisted unto blood.

What thou sufferest is but little in comparison of those who have suffered so much, who have been so strongly tempted, so grievously afflicted, in so manifold ways tried and exercised.

Thou must, then, call to mind the heavier sufferings of others, that thou mayest the more easily bear the very little things thou sufferest.

And if to thee they seem not very little, take heed lest this also proceed from thine impatience.

But whether they be little or great, strive to bear them all with patience.

The better thou disposest thyself for suffering, the more wisely dost thou act and the more fully dost thou merit; and thou wilt bear it more lightly when thy mind is well prepared for it and thou art accustomed to it.

And say not, I cannot bear these things from

such a man, nor are things of this kind to be endured by me, for he has done me a great injury, and he upbraids me with things I never thought of; but I will gladly suffer from another, and as far as I shall judge fitting for me to suffer.

Such a thought is foolish, for it considers not the virtue of patience nor by whom it shall be crowned, but rather broods over the persons, and the offences given to self.

He who will suffer no more than seems him good, and from whom he pleases, is not a truly patient man.

The truly patient man considers not by what man he is tried, whether by his superior, by an equal, or by an inferior, whether by a good and holy man, or by one that is perverse and unworthy.

But how much soever and how often soever any adversity happen to him from any thing created, he takes it all from the hand of God with joy, and esteems it great gain.

For nothing, how little soever, that is suffered for the sake of God, can pass without merit in the sight of God.

Be thou therefore girt for the fight if thou desirest to gain the victory.

Without a struggle thou canst not obtain the crown of patience.

If thou wilt not suffer, thou refusest to be crowned; but if thou desirest to be crowned, fight manfully, endure patiently.

Without labour we are not on the way to rest, and without fighting we come not to victory.

May thy grace, O Lord, make that possible to me which seems impossible to me by nature.

Thou knowest that I can bear but little, and that I am quickly cast down when a small adversity arises.

Let any exercise of tribulation become an object of love and desire to me because of thy name, for to suffer and to be harassed for thee is very healthful to my soul.

Chapter XX.—Of the Confession of our own Infirmity, and of the Miseries of this Life.

I will confess against myself mine injustice. I will confess to thee, O Lord, my infirmity.

It is oftentimes a small thing which casts me down and troubles me.

I make a resolution to behave myself valiantly; but when a small temptation comes, I am brought into great straits.

It is sometimes a very trifling thing whence a grievous temptation springs up.

And when I think myself somewhat safe, while I have no feeling, I sometimes find myself almost overcome by the merest puff of wind.

Behold then, O Lord, my low estate and my frailty, which are every way known to thee.

Have pity on me, and draw me out of the mire, that I stick not fast therein, that I may not abide utterly cast down for ever.

This it is which often beats me back and confounds me in thy sight, that I am so prone to fall and have so little strength to resist my passions.

And although I do not altogether consent, yet their pursuit of me is troublesome and grievous, and it is a weariness to live thus daily in conflict.

Hence my infirmity is made known to me, because loathsome imaginations always much more easily rush in upon me than they depart.

Would that thou, the most mighty God of Israel, the zealous lover of faithful souls, wouldest behold the labour and sorrow of thy servant, and stand by him in all things, to whatsoever he directs his steps.

Strengthen me with heavenly fortitude, lest the old man, the miserable flesh not fully subject to the spirit, should prevail and get the upper hand; against which it will behove us to fight as long as we breathe in this most wretched life.

Alas, what kind of life is this, where troubles and miseries are never wanting; where all things are full of snares and enemies?

For when one trouble or temptation departs, another comes; yea, and while the first conflict lasts, many others come on, and when least expected.

And how can a life be loved which has such

great bitterness, is subject to so many calamities and miseries?

How can it even be called life since it begets so many deaths and plagues?

And yet it is loved, and many seek their delight in it.

Many blame the world as being deceitful and vain; yet they are not willing to leave it, because the lusts of the flesh have too much sway.

But some things draw them to love the world, others to despise it.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, draw to the love of the world; but the pains and miseries which justly follow these things, breed a hatred and loathing of the world.

But alas, sinful pleasure prevails over the worldly soul; and she thinks it a delight to be under these briars, because she has neither seen nor tasted the sweetness of God, nor the inward pleasures of virtue.

But they who perfectly despise the world and make it their aim to live to God under holy discipline, experience the divine sweetness promised to those who truly forsake all; and these see clearly how grievously the world is mistaken, and in how many ways it is deceived.

Chapter XXI.—That We are to Rest in God above all Goods and Gifts.

Above all things and in all things shalt thou, my soul, rest always in the Lord, for he is the eternal rest of the saints.

Grant me, most sweet and loving Jesus, to rest in thee above all things created; above all health and beauty, above all glory and honour, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and subtlety, above all riches and arts, above all joy and gladness, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and consolation, above all hope and promise, above all merit and desire, above all gifts and boons which thou canst give and infuse, above all joy and jubilation which the mind can contain and feel; in a word, above all angels and archangels and all the host of heaven, above all things visible and invisible, and above all that is not thee, my God.

For thou, O Lord my God, art above all things best; thou alone most high, thou alone most powerful, thou alone most sufficient and most full, thou alone most sweet and most comfortable.

Thou alone most fair and most loving, thou alone most noble and most glorious above all things; in whom all things are at once and perfectly good, and ever have been, and shall be.

And therefore, whatever thou bestowest upon me beside thyself, or whatever thou revealest or promisest concerning thyself, as long as I do not see or fully enjoy thee, is too little and fails to satisfy me.

Because indeed my heart cannot truly rest nor be entirely contented, unless it rest in thee and rise above all thy gifts and all things created.

O my most beloved spouse, Christ Jesus, most pure lover, ruler of all creation; who will give me the wings of true liberty to fly and repose in thee? Oh, when shall it be fully granted me to be at leisure and see how sweet thou art, O Lord my God?

When shall I fully recollect myself in thee, that through the love of thee I may not feel myself, but thee alone, above all feeling and measure, in a manner not known to all?

But now I often sigh, and bear my unhappiness with grief;

Because I meet with many evils in this vale of miseries, which frequently disturb me, sadden me, and bring a cloud over me; which often hinder and distract me, allure and entangle me, so that I may not have free access to thee, nor enjoy thy sweet embraces, so readily granted to the blessed spirits.

Let my sighing move thee and the manifold desolation upon earth.

O Jesus, brightness of the eternal glory, comfort of the pilgrim soul, with thee are my lips without a voice, and my very silence speaks to thee.

How long delays my Lord his coming? Let him come to me, his poor servant, and make me glad; let him stretch forth his hand and deliver me, a wretch, from all anguish.

Come, come, for without thee there will be no glad day nor hour, for thou art my gladness, and without thee my table is unspread.

I am miserable, and in a manner imprisoned and laden with fetters, till thou comfort me with the light of thy presence, and restore me to liberty and show me a cheerful countenance.

Let others seek, instead of thee, whatever else they please: nothing else the while pleases me, nor shall please me, but thou, my God, my hope, my eternal salvation.

I will not hold my peace nor cease to entreat thee until thy grace returns and thou speakest inwardly to me.

Behold, here am I; behold, I come to thee, for thou hast called me.

Thy tears and the desire of thy soul, thy humiliation and contrition of heart, have made me stoop and brought me to thee.

And I said: Lord, I have called upon thee and have desired to enjoy thee, being ready to reject all things for thee.

For thou didst first stir me up that I might seek thee.

Be thou therefore blessed, O Lord, who hast

done this goodness to thy servant according to the multitude of thy mercy.

What more has thy servant to say in thy presence, but to humble himself exceedingly before thee, always remembering his own iniquity and vileness?

For there is none like unto thee amongst all things wonderful in heaven or on earth.

Thy works are very good, thy judgments are true, and by thy providence all things are ruled.

Praise therefore and glory be to thee, O Wisdom of the Father; let my mouth praise and bless thee, my soul and all created things together.

Chapter XXII.—Of the Remembrance of the Manifold Benefits of God.

Open, O Lord, my heart in thy law, and teach me to walk in thy commandments.

Give me to understand thy will and to commemorate with great reverence and diligent consideration all thy benefits, as well in general as in particular; that from this time forth I may be able worthily to give thee thanks. But I know and confess that I am not able to return due thanks, not even for the least point.

I am less than all thy goods bestowed upon me; and when I consider thine excellency, my spirit fails before the greatness of it.

All we have in soul and body, all we possess

without or within, naturally or supernaturally, are thy benefits, and show forth thy bounty, mercy and goodness, from whom we have received all good things.

And though one has received more, another less, yet all is thine, and without thee even the least cannot be had.

He who has received greater things cannot glory in his own merit, nor boast himself above others, nor insult over the lesser; because he is indeed greater and better who attributes less to himself, and is more humble and devout in returning thanks.

And he who esteems himself the vilest of men and judges himself the most unworthy, is fittest to receive the greatest blessings.

But he who has received fewer must not be sorrowful nor take it ill, nor envy him who is more enriched; but must wait rather on thee, and above all praise thy goodness, for that thou bestowest thy gifts so plentifully, so freely and willingly, without respect of persons.

All things are from thee, and therefore thou art to be praised in all.

Thou knowest what is fit to be given to every one; and why one has less and another more is not ours to decide, but thine, who keepest an exact account of the merits of each.

Wherefore, Lord God, I take it for a great

benefit not to have much which outwardly and according to men appears praiseworthy and glorious; so that a man, considering his own poverty and meanness, ought not therefore to be weighed down or to be grieved and dejected, but rather to receive comfort and great joy.

Because thou, O God, hast chosen the poor and humble, and those who are despised by this world, for thy familiar friends and servants.

Witness thy apostles themselves, whom thou didst make princes over all the earth.

And yet they walked in this world without rebuke, so humble and simple, without any malice or guile, that they were even glad to suffer reproaches for thy name; and what the world flies from they embraced with great affection.

Nothing therefore should so gladden him who loves thee and knows thy benefits, as thy will in him and the good pleasure of thy eternal appointment;

Wherewith he ought to be so far contented and comforted, as to be as willing to be the least as another would wish to be the greatest; and to enjoy as much peace and content in the lowest place as in the highest; and to be as willing to be despicable and mean and of no name and repute, as to be preferred in honour and greater in the world than others.

For thy will and the love of thine honour ought to surpass all, and to comfort and please him more than all the benefits which thou hast given or shalt give.

Chapter XXIII.—Of Four Things which Bring much Peace.

Son, I will now teach thee the way of peace and of true liberty.

Do, Lord, as thou sayest, for this it pleases me to hear.

Make this thine aim, my son, rather to do the will of another than thine own.

Ever choose rather to have less than more.

Always seek the lower place and to be under the authority of all.

Always wish and pray that the will of God may be wholly done in thee.

Behold, such a man as this enters into the region of peace and rest.

Lord, this thy short discourse contains much perfection.

Small though it be in word, yet is it full in sense and plentiful in fruit.

For if I could faithfully keep it I should not be so easily troubled.

For as often as I feel myself disquieted and burthened, I find that I have strayed from this doctrine.

But do thou, who canst do all things, and always lovest the progress of the soul, increase in me thy grace, that I may accomplish these thy words and perfect my salvation.

A PRAYER AGAINST EVIL THOUGHTS.

O Lord my God, depart not far from me; my God, look on me to help me; for divers thoughts and great fears have risen up against me, afflicting my soul.

How shall I get over them without hurt? How shall I break through them?

I will go before thee, saith he, and will humble the great ones of the earth.

I will open the gates of the prison and will reveal to thee hidden things of secret places.

Do, O Lord, as thou sayest, and let all these evil thoughts flee from before thy face.

This is my hope and my one consolation, to fly to thee in every tribulation, to trust in thee, to call on thee from my heart, and patiently to wait for thy consolation.

A PRAYER FOR THE ENLIGHTENING OF THE MIND.

Enlighten me, O good Jesus, with the brightness of internal light, and cast out all darkness from the dwelling of my heart.

Restrain my many wandering thoughts, and crush the temptations which violently assault me.

Fight mightily for me and overcome these wicked beasts, I mean these enticing lusts, that

there may be peace in thy strength, and that the abundance of thy praise may resound in the holy court, which is a clean conscience.

Command the winds and storms; say to the sea: Be still; and to the north wind: Blow thou not; and there shall be a great calm.

Send out thy light and thy truth that they may shine upon the earth; for I am as earth that is empty and void till thou enlightenest me.

Pour forth thy grace from above; water my heart with the dew of heaven; send down the waters of devotion to wash the face of the earth, that it bring forth good and perfect fruit.

Lift up my mind, oppressed with the load of sins, and raise my whole desire towards heavenly things; that, having tasted the sweetness of the bliss above, it may irk me to think of earthly things.

Tear me away and snatch me from all fleeting consolation of the creature, for no created thing can fully still and satisfy my desire.

Join me to thyself with the inseparable bond of love; for thou alone sufficest him who loves thee, and without thee all things are worthless.

Chapter XXIV.—That we are not to be Curious in Inquiring into the Lives of Others.

Son, be not curious, and take not on thyself empty cares.

What is this or that to thee? Follow thou me.

For what is it to thee whether this man be such or such, or that other do or say thus and thus?

Thou needest not to answer for others, but must give an account for thyself; why then dost thou entangle thyself?

Behold, I know every one, and see all things that are done under the sun; and I know how it is with every one, what he thinks, what he would have, and at what his intention aims.

All things therefore are to be committed to me; but keep thou thyself in good peace, and let the busy-body be as busy as he will.

Whatsoever he shall do or say will come upon himself, because he cannot deceive me.

Have no care for the shadow of a great name, neither for the familiar acquaintance of many, nor for the personal love of men.

For these things beget distractions and great obscurity in heart.

Gladly would I speak to thee my word and reveal my secret things to thee, if thou wouldest diligently

watch for my coming and open to me the door of thy heart.

Be careful, and watch unto prayer, and humble thyself in all things.

Chapter XXV.—In what Things Firm Peace of Heart and True Progress Consist.

Son, I have said: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you.

Peace is what all desire; but not all care for those things which make for true peace.

My peace is with the humble and meek of heart; thy peace shall be in much patience.

If thou wilt hear me and follow my voice, thou wilt enjoy much peace.

What, then, shall I do?

In every thing attend to thyself, what thou art doing and what thou art saying; and direct thy whole intention to this, that thou mayest please me alone and neither desire nor seek any thing apart from me.

As for the sayings or doings of others, judge nothing rashly, and busy not thyself with things not committed to thy care; and so it may come to pass that thou be little or seldom disturbed.

But never to feel any disturbance at all, nor to suffer any grief of heart or body, belongs not to this present life, but is the state of everlasting rest.

Think not therefore that thou hast found true peace if thou feelest no burden; nor that then all is well if thou hast to withstand no adversary; nor that thou hast attained to perfection if all things are done according to thine inclination.

Neither then think thyself any thing great nor imagine thyself to be especially beloved if thou experience great devotion and sweetness; for it is not in such things that a true lover of virtue is known, nor does the progress and perfection of man consist in these things.

In what, then, O Lord?

In offering thyself with thy whole heart to the divine will; in not seeking the things that are thine, whether in little or great, in time or in eternity.

So that with the same equal countenance thou mayest continue the giving of thanks both in prosperity and in adversity, by weighing all things in an equal balance.

If thou shouldest come to be so valiant and long-suffering in hope that, when inward consolation is withdrawn, thou canst prepare thy heart to suffer still more; and when thou dost not justify thyself as if thou oughtest not to suffer such great things, but acknowledgest my justice in all my appointments and praisest my holy name, then it is that

thou walkest in the true and right way of peace, and mayest hope without any doubt to see my face again with great joy.

And if thou shouldest arrive at an entire contempt of thyself, know that then thou shalt enjoy an abundance of peace as far as is possible in this sojourn on earth.

Chapter XXVI.—Of the Surpassing Benefit of a Free Mind, which is Gained by Humble Prayer rather than by Reading.

Lord, this is the work of a perfect man, never to let the mind slacken from attending to heavenly things, and to pass through many cares as though without care; not after the manner of a sluggard, but by a certain prerogative of a free mind, which does not cleave with inordinate affection to any creature.

Preserve me, I beseech thee, O most compassionate God, from the cares of this life, that I be not too much entangled by them; from the many necessities of the body, that I may not be ensnared by pleasure; and from all hindrances of the soul, lest, being disheartened by troubles, I be cast down.

I do not say from those things which worldly vanity covets with eager desire, but from those

miseries, which, by the common doom of mortality, as punishments, weigh down and keep back the soul of thy servant, lest, when it wishes, it be able to enter into liberty of spirit.

O my God, unspeakable sweetness, turn for me into bitterness all carnal consolation which withdraws me from the love of things eternal, and wickedly allures me to itself by setting before me some present delightful good.

My God, let not flesh and blood prevail against me, let them not prevail against me; let not the world and its brief glory deceive me; let not the devil and his devices trip me up.

Give me fortitude, that I may stand; patience, that I may endure; constancy, that I may persevere.

Give me, in place of all the consolations of this world, the sweetest unction of thy spirit; and instead of carnal love, infuse into me the love of thy name.

Behold; eating, drinking, clothing, and other necessaries pertaining to the support of the body, are burthensome to a fervent spirit.

Grant me to use such comforts with moderation, and not to be entangled with an excessive longing for them.

It is not allowed us to cast them all away, for nature must be supported; but thy holy law forbids to require superfluities, and such things as are for mere delight; for otherwise the flesh would grow insolent against the spirit.

Between these, I beseech thee, let thy hand govern and direct me, that nothing be done in excess.

Chapter XXVII.—That Nothing Keeps us back from the Sovereign Good so much as Self-Love.

Son, it behoves thee to give all for all, and not be in any wise thine own.

Know that the love of thyself is more hurtful to thee than any thing of this world.

Every thing, according to the love and inclination which thou hast to it, cleaves to thee more or less.

If thy love be pure, simple, and well-ordered, thou wilt be free from bondage to earthly things.

Covet not that which thou mayest not have.

Seek not to have that which may fetter thee or rob thee of thy inward liberty.

It is wonderful that thou wilt not from the very bottom of thy heart commit thyself to me, with all things that thou canst desire or have.

Why art thou consumed with vain grief? Why art thou wearied with superfluous cares?

Be resigned to my good pleasure, and thou shalt suffer no loss.

If thou seekest this or that, and wouldest be here or there, for thine own advantage and thine own good pleasure, thou wilt never be at rest nor free

from anxiety; for in every thing thou wilt find some defect, and in every place there will be some one who will cross thee.

It is not therefore the obtaining or multiplying outward things that avails thee, but rather the despising of them, and the cutting them by the root out of thy heart; and I would not have thee to understand this only with regard to money and riches, but also with regard to the quest of honour and the desire of empty praise, all which things pass away with the world.

The place is but small defence if the spirit of fervour be wanting; neither will that peace which is sought from without stand long if the state of thy heart wants the true foundation, that is, if thou stand not in me; thou mayest change, but not better thyself.

For should occasion arise and thou allow it, thou wilt find that which thou didst fly from, and even more.

A PRAYER FOR CLEANSING THE HEART AND FOR HEAVENLY WISDOM.

STRENGTHEN me, O God, by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Give me power to be strengthened in the inner man, and to cast out of my heart all unprofitable care and cark. Let me not be drawn away with various desires of any thing whatsoever, whether it be of little or great value; but teach me

to look upon all things as passing away, and myself as soon to pass away with them.

For nothing is lasting under the sun, where all is vanity and affliction of spirit. Oh, how wise is he who considers thus!

Give me, O Lord, heavenly wisdom, that I may learn above all things to seek and find thee, above all things to relish and love thee, and to understand all other things, according to the order of thy wisdom, as they truly are.

Grant me to avoid prudently him who flatters me, and patiently to bear with him who contradicts me.

For it is great wisdom not to be moved with every wind of words, nor to give ear to the siren falsely beguiling; for thus shall we go on securely in the way we have begun.

Chapter XXVIII.—Against the Tongues of Detractors.

Son, take it not to heart if some think ill of thee, and say of thee what thou dost not gladly hear.

Thou oughtest to think worse things of thyself, and to believe that no one is weaker than thyself.

If thou walkest in the spirit thou wilt make small account of flying words.

It is no small prudence to be silent in the evil

time, and to turn within to me, and not to be disturbed with man's judgment.

Let not thy peace be in the tongues of men; for whether they put a good or bad construction on what thou dost, thou art not therefore another man.

Where is true peace and true glory? Is it not in me?

And he who covets not to please men and fears not their displeasure, shall enjoy much peace.

All disquiet of heart and distraction of the senses arise from inordinate love and vain fear.

Chapter XXIX. — How in the Time of Tribulation God is to be Invoked and Blessed.

Blessed, O Lord, be thy name for ever, who hast been pleased that this trial and tribulation should come upon me.

I cannot fly from it; but I must of necessity fly to thee, that thou mayest help me and turn it to my good.

Lord, I am now in tribulation, and my heart is not at ease, but I am much harassed with my present suffering.

And now, beloved Father, what shall I say? I am brought into great straits; save me from this hour.

But for this cause came I unto this hour, that thou mightest be glorified when I shall be effectually humbled and by thee delivered.

May it please thee, O Lord, to deliver me; for, poor wretch that I am, what can I do and whither shall I go without thee?

Give me patience, O Lord, yet once again.

Help me, my God, and I shall not fear, how much soever I be oppressed.

And now in the midst of these things what shall I say? Lord, thy will be done, I have well deserved to suffer tribulation and be heavy laden.

I must without doubt bear it, and would it were with patience, till the storm be overpast and it be better.

But thine almighty hand is able to take away from me this trial also, and to moderate its violence, lest I wholly sink under it, as thou hast often heretofore dealt with me, my God, my mercy.

And how much the more difficult this is to me, so much the easier to thee is this change of the right hand of the Most High.

Chapter XXX.—Of Asking the Divine Aid, and of Confidence of Recovering Grace.

Son, I am the Lord, who gives strength in the day of tribulation.

Come to me when it is not well with thee.

This is that which most of all hinders heavenly consolation, that thou art too slow in turning thyself to prayer.

For before thou earnestly prayest to me, thou seekest in the mean time much solace, and refreshest thyself in outward things.

And hence it comes to pass that all things avail thee little till thou callest to mind that I am he who delivers those that hope in me. Nor is there apart from me any effectual help, nor profitable counsel, nor lasting remedy.

But now having recovered breath after the storm, grow thou strong again in the light of my mercies; for I am at hand, saith the Lord, to repair all things, not only to make them whole, but even with abundance and above measure.

Is anything difficult to me? or shall I be like one who promises and does not perform?

Where is thy faith? Stand firmly and with perseverance.

Have patience and be a man of courage; consolation will come to thee in its own time.

Wait for me, wait; I will come and cure thee.

What harasses thee is but a temptation, and a vain fear which frightens thee.

What does concern about future accidents bring thee but only sorrow upon sorrow? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

It is a vain and unprofitable thing to be troubled or glad about future things, which perhaps will never happen.

But it is common to man to be deluded with such imaginings; and to be so easily drawn away by the suggestions of the enemy is a sign of a soul which is as yet weak.

For he cares not whether it be with things true or false that he dupes thee and deceives thee, whether he overthrow thee with the love of things present, or the fear of things to come.

Let not therefore thy heart be troubled, and let it not fear.

Believe in me and put thy trust in my mercy.

When thou thinkest that thou art far from me, I am often nearest to thee.

When thou judgest that almost all is lost, then oftentimes a greater reward of thy desert is at hand.

All is not lost when anything falls out otherwise than thou wouldest have it.

Thou must not judge according to thy present feeling; nor must thou so dwell upon nor take any trouble whencesoever it comes, as if all hope were gone of being delivered out of it.

Think not thyself wholly forsaken, although for a time I have sent thee some tribulation or withdrawn from thee the consolation which thou desirest; for this is the way to the kingdom of heaven.

And without doubt it is more expedient for thee and for my other servants that ye be exercised by adversity, than that ye should have all things according to your inclination.

I know thy hidden thoughts; I know that it is

very expedient for thy salvation that thou shouldest sometimes be left without savour, lest thou shouldest be puffed up with good success, and shouldest take pleasure in thyself, in that which thou art not.

What I have given I can take away, and restore again when I please.

When I give it, it is still mine; when I take it away again, I take not any thing that is thine; for every good gift and every perfect gift is mine.

If I send thee heaviness or any hindrance, fret not, neither let thy heart be cast down.

I can quickly raise thee up again and turn all thy burthen into joy.

Nevertheless, I am just and greatly to be praised when I deal thus with thee.

If thou thinkest rightly and considerest things in truth, thou oughtest never to be so cast down and saddened by any adversity; but thou oughtest rather to rejoice and give thanks, yea, to account this as the only joy, that afflicting thee with sorrows I do not spare thee.

As the Father hath loved me, I also love you, said I to my beloved disciples, whom certainly I did not send to temporal joys, but to great conflicts; not to honours, but to contempt; not to ease, but to toils; not to rest, but to bring forth much fruit in patience. Remember these words, my son.

Chapter XXXI. — Of Neglecting every Creature, that so we may Find the Creator.

Lord, I stand much in need of a grace yet greater, if I am to arrive so far that it may not be in the power of any man nor any created thing to hinder me.

For as long as any thing holds me back I cannot freely fly to thee.

He was desirous to fly freely to thee who said, Who will give me wings like a dove? and I will flee away and be at rest.

What can be more at rest than a single eye?

And what can be more free than he who desires nothing upon earth?

A man ought therefore to mount far above every creature, and perfectly to forsake himself, and in ecstasy of mind to stand and see that thou, the Creator of all things, art in no wise like thy creatures.

And unless a man be disentangled from all creatures, he cannot freely make things divine his aim.

And this is the reason why there are found so few contemplative men, because there are few who know how to separate themselves wholly from perishing and created things.

For this a great grace is required, which may raise the soul and bear it up above itself.

And unless a man be raised in spirit and set free

from all creatures, and wholly made one with God, whatever he knows and whatever he has is of no great weight.

A long while shall he be little, and low shall he lie who esteems any thing great, but only the one, immense, eternal good.

And whatsoever is not God is nothing, and ought to be accounted as nothing.

There is a great difference between the wisdom of an enlightened and devout man, and the knowledge of a well-read and studious clerk.

Far more noble is that learning which flows from above, from the divine influence, than that which is painfully gained by the wit of man.

Many are found to desire contemplation, but they make it not their aim to practise those things which are required thereunto.

It is a great hindrance that we rest in signs and sensible things, and have but little of perfect mortification.

I know not what it is, by what spirit we are led, nor what we pretend to, who seem to be called spiritual; that we take so much pains and have a great solicitude for transitory and mean things, and scarce ever have our senses fully recollected to think of our own inner life.

Alas, after a slight recollection we presently break out again, neither do we weigh well our works by a strict examination.

We take no notice where our affections lie; nor do we bewail the lack of pure intention.

For all flesh had corrupted its way, and therefore the great flood came upon it.

As therefore our inward affection is greatly corrupted, it must needs be that the action which follows should also be corrupt, for it shows that we lack inward vigour.

From a pure heart proceeds the fruit of a good life.

We are apt to inquire how much a man has done; but with how much virtue he acts is not so diligently considered.

We ask whether he be strong, rich, fair, a ready or a good writer, a good singer, a good workman; but many say nothing of how poor he is in spirit, how patient and meek, how devout and spiritual.

Nature looks upon the outward things of a man, but grace turns herself to the inward.

Nature often mistakes, but grace has her trust in God, that she may not be deceived.

Chapter XXXII.—Of Denying Ourselves and Renouncing all Covetousness.

Son, thou canst not possess perfect liberty unless thou wholly deny thyself.

All self-seekers and self-lovers are bound in fetters, full of desires, inquisitive gossips, always seeking their own ease, and not the things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which will not stand.

For that which proceeds not from God shall perish utterly.

Take this short and perfect word : Forsake all and thou shalt find all ; leave thy desires and thou shalt find rest.

Consider this well, and when thou hast put it in practice thou wilt understand all things.

Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor child's play ; nay, in this short sentence is included the whole perfection of the religious.

Son, thou must not be turned back nor presently cast down when thou hearest what the way of the perfect is ; but thou shouldest rather be incited to higher things, or at least sigh after these with an earnest desire.

Would it were so with thee, and that thou wert come so far that thou wert no longer a lover of thyself, but didst stand wholly at my beck and that of the father, whom I have set over thee ; then wouldest thou be greatly pleasing to me, and all thy life would pass in joy and peace.

Thou hast yet many things to forsake, and unless thou give them up to me without reserve thou shalt not attain to that which thou demandest.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be made rich ; that is, heavenly wisdom, which treads under foot all lower things.

Set aside the wisdom of the earth, all seeking to please the world and thyself.

I have said that thou shouldest buy what is of less value rather than the precious and the highly-prized among human things.

For true heavenly wisdom is regarded as very mean and contemptible, and well nigh forgotten; that wisdom which thinks not high things of self and seeks not to become great upon earth; which many praise with their lips, but from which in their life they are far away; yet this same is that precious pearl which is hidden from many.

Chapter XXXIII.—Of the Inconstancy of the Heart, and of Directing our Final Intention to God.

Son, trust not to thy present affection, it will quickly be changed to something else.

As long as thou livest thou art subject to change, even against thy will; so as to be found sometimes joyful, at other times sad; now at peace, then troubled; now devout, now without devotion; now full of zeal, now sluggish; now grave, now gay.

But he who is wise and well instructed in spirit, stands above all these changeable things, not heeding what he feels in himself nor from what quarter the wind of change blows, but that the whole bent of his soul may advance towards its due and wished-for end.

For thus will he be able to continue one and

the same unshaken, ever directing through so many changing events the single eye of his intention towards me.

And by how much more pure the eye of thine intention is, with so much greater constancy mayest thou pass through these divers storms.

But in many the eye of pure intention is dim; for men quickly look towards something delightful which comes in their way; and it is rare to find one wholly free from all blemish of self-seeking.

So the Jews heretofore came to Bethany, to Martha and Mary, not for the sake of Jesus only, but that they might see Lazarus.

The eye of the intention therefore must be purified, that it may be single and right; and it must be directed unto me beyond all the various means of reaching me.

Chapter XXXIV.—That he who Loves God Relishes Him above all Things and in all Things.

Behold, my God and my all! What would I have more, and what greater happiness can I desire?

O savoury and sweet word! but to him who loves the Word, not the world nor the things that are in the world.

My God and my all! Enough is said to him

who understands; and to repeat it often is delightful to him who loves.

For when thou art present, all things yield delight; but when thou art absent, all things cause loathing.

Thou givest tranquillity to the heart, and great peace and festal gladness.

Thou makest us be content with all things, and in all things praise thee; nor can any thing without thee afford lasting pleasure; but to make it agreeable and relishing, thy grace must be present, and it must be seasoned with the seasoning of thy wisdom.

He who has a relish of thee will find all things savoury.

And to him who relishes thee not, what can ever yield any delight?

But the wise of this world and they who have fleshly desire are wanting in thy wisdom; because in the world there is much vanity, and following the flesh leads to death.

But they who follow thee by despising the things of this world and mortifying the flesh, are found to be wise indeed; for they are translated from vanity to the truth, from the flesh to the spirit.

Such as these have a relish for God; and what good soever is found in creatures, they refer it all to the praise of their Maker.

But great, yea, very great, is the difference between the relish of the Creator and the creature, of eternity and of time, of light uncreated and of light enlightened.

O light eternal, transcending all created lights,

send forth thy lightening from above, that it may pierce to the most inward parts of my heart.

Cleanse, gladden, enlighten, and quicken my spirit with its powers, that it may cleave unto thee with ecstasies of joy.

Oh, when will this blessed and desirable hour come, when thou shalt fill me with thy presence, and be to me all in all!

So long as this is not granted me my joy will not be full.

Alas, the old man is still living in me; he is not wholly crucified, he is not perfectly dead.

He still lusts strongly against the spirit; he wages war within me, and suffers not the kingdom of my soul to be quiet.

But thou, who rulest the power of the sea and stillest the moving of the waves thereof, arise and help me.

Scatter thou the nations that delight in wars; crush them by thy power.

Show forth, I beseech thee, thy marvellous works, and let thy right hand be made glorious; for there is no other hope nor refuge for me but in thee, O Lord my God.

Chapter XXXV.—That there is no Security from Temptation in this Life.

Son, thou art never secure in this life; but as long as thou livest thou hast always need of spiritual arms.

Thou art in the midst of enemies, and art assailed on the right and on the left.

If, then, thou dost not on all sides make use of the shield of patience, thou wilt not be long without a wound.

Moreover, if thou dost not set thy heart fixedly on me with a sincere will of suffering all things for my sake, thou canst not support the heat of this warfare, nor attain to the palm of the saints; it behoves thee therefore to go through all manfully, and to use a strong hand against all that comes in thy way.

For to him who overcomes is the manna given, and to the sluggard is left much misery.

If thou seekest rest in this life, how wilt thou then come to the rest eternal?

Lay not thyself out for much rest, but for great patience.

Seek true peace, not on earth, but in heaven; not in men nor in other things created, but in God alone.

For the love of God thou shouldest gladly suffer

all things, such as labours and sorrows, trials, vexations, anxieties, necessities, sicknesses, injuries, detractions, rebukes, humiliations, confusions, corrections, and contempt.

These things help towards virtue; these test the young soldier of Christ; these forge the heavenly crown.

I will give eternal recompense for brief toil, and glory without end for transitory confusion.

Dost thou think always to have spiritual consolations at thy will?

My saints had not such, but many troubles, and various temptations, and great desolations.

But they bore themselves in all with patience, and trusted more in God than in themselves, knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory hereafter to be won.

Wouldest thou have that immediately, which others after many tears and great labours have scarcely obtained?

Wait for the Lord, do manfully, and be of good heart; do not despond, do not fall off, but constantly offer both soul and body for the glory of God.

I will recompense thee most abundantly, I will be with thee in all tribulation.

CHAPTER XXXVI.—AGAINST THE VAIN JUDGMENTS OF MEN.

SON, cast thy heart firmly on the Lord, and fear not the judgment of man, when thy conscience assures thee of thy piety and innocence.

It is good and blessed to suffer thus; neither will this be grievous to an humble heart, and one that trusts in God more than in itself.

Many say many things, and therefore little trust is to be placed in them.

Neither is it possible to content all.

Though Paul endeavoured to please all in the Lord, and made himself all things to all men, yet he counted it a very small thing that he should be judged by the judgment of men.

He laboured for the edifying and salvation of others as much as in him lay, and as he was able; but he could not prevent being sometimes judged or despised by others.

Therefore he committed all to God who knew all, and defended himself by patience and humility against the tongues of those who spoke evil, or thought and uttered vain and false things of him as they pleased.

However, he answered them sometimes, lest his silence might give occasion of scandal to the weak.

Who art thou that thou shouldest be afraid of a mortal man? To-day he is, and to-morrow he appears no more.

Fear God, and thou shalt not tremble at the terrors of men.

What can any one do against thee by words or wrongs? He hurts himself rather than thee; nor can he, whoever he be, escape the judgment of God.

See thou have God before thine eyes, and strive not with complaining words.

And if at present thou seemest to be overcome and to suffer a confusion which thou hast not deserved, be not angry at this, and do not lessen thy crown by impatience; but rather look up to me in heaven, who am able to deliver thee from all confusion and wrong, and to reward every man according to his works.

Chapter XXXVII.—Of a Pure and Full Resignation of Self for Obtaining Freedom of Heart.

Son, leave thyself, and thou shalt find me.

Stand without choice or any self-seeking, and thou wilt always gain.

For greater grace will be added to thee when thou hast perfectly given up thyself and hast not taken thyself back again.

Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in what things shall I leave myself?

Always, and at all times; as in little, so also in

great things; I except nothing, but will have thee to be found stripped in all things of thyself.

Otherwise, how canst thou be mine, and I thine, unless thou be both within and without despoiled of all self-will?

The sooner thou effectest this, the better will it be for thee; and the more fully and sincerely, the more wilt thou please me, and the more wilt thou gain.

Some resign themselves, but with a certain reserve; for they do not wholly trust in God, and are therefore busy to provide for themselves. Some also at the first offer all; but afterwards, being buffeted by temptation, return again to their own; and therefore they make no progress in virtue.

These will not attain to the true liberty of a pure heart, nor to the grace of a delightful familiarity with me, unless they first entirely resign themselves, and offer themselves a daily sacrifice to me; for without this the union of fruition does not and cannot last.

I have very often said to thee, and I say it now again: Forsake thyself, resign thyself, and thou shalt enjoy great peace within.

Give all for all, seek nothing, ask nothing; stand purely and with a full confidence in me, and thou shalt possess me.

Thou wilt be free in heart, and darkness will not tread thee down.

Aim at this, pray for this, long for this, that thou

mayest be unclothed of all self-seeking, and thus mayest naked follow Jesus naked; to die to thyself, and to live eternally to me.

Then all vain fancies will vanish, all evil disturbances and superfluous cares.

Then too immoderate fear will leave thee, and inordinate love will die.

Chapter XXXVIII.—Of Good Government in outward Things, and of Recourse to God in Dangers.

Son, thou must diligently make it thine aim that in every place and in every action or outward employment, thou be inwardly free and master of thyself; and that all things be under thee, and not thou under them.

That thou mayest be lord and ruler of thine actions, not a slave or bought with a price.

But rather a freeman and a true Hebrew, passing on to the inheritance and the liberty of the children of God;

Who stand above the things present, and contemplate those which are eternal;

Who look upon transitory things with the left eye, and with the right the things of heaven;

Whom things temporal draw not to cleave to them, but who rather draw them to that goodly service for which they were ordained by God, and

appointed by that highest artist who has left nothing unordered in all his works.

If, likewise, in all that may come to pass, thou dost stand not in the outward appearance, nor lookest on the things which thou seest or hearest with an eye of flesh, but dost presently on every occasion enter like Moses into the tabernacle to consult the Lord, thou shalt not seldom hear the divine answer, and come out instructed in many things present and to come.

For Moses always had recourse to the tabernacle for deciding doubts and questions, and fled to the help of prayer from perils and from the untowardness of men.

So must thou in like manner fly to the closet of thy heart, and must there earnestly implore the divine assistance, for Joshua and the children of Israel, as thou readest, were therefore deceived by the Gibeonites, because they did not first ask counsel from the mouth of the Lord, but trusting too easily to fair words, were deluded with counterfeit piety.

Chapter XXXIX.—That a Man must not be Over-eager in his Affairs.

Son, always commit thy cause to me; I will dispose well of it in due season. Wait for my disposal, and thou shalt find profit therein.

Lord, I willingly commit all things to thee; for my thinking can profit little.

Would that I did not cleave so much to future events, but offered myself with all readiness to thy good pleasure.

Son, oftentimes a man eagerly sets about a thing which he desires; but when he has obtained it he begins to be of another mind. For the inclinations of men do not continue long upon the same thing, but rather urge them to go from one thing to another.

It is therefore no trifling matter to forsake thyself even in the least things.

The true progress of man consists in denying himself; and the man who has denied himself is wholly free and safe.

But the old enemy, who opposes all that is good, ceases not to tempt, but day and night weaves his dark device if perchance he may throw the unwary into the snare of deception. Watch and pray, saith the Lord, that ye enter not into temptation.

Chapter XL.—That Man has no Good in Himself, and can Glory in none.

Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

What has man deserved that thou shouldest give him thy grace?

Lord, how can I complain if thou forsake me? or what can I justly allege if thou dost not what I seek?

This indeed I may truly think and say: Lord, I am nothing, I can do nothing, I have nothing of myself that is good; but in all things I come short, and ever tend to nothing.

And unless I am supported and inwardly informed by thee, I become altogether lukewarm and am brought to nought.

But thou, O Lord, art always the same, and endurest for ever; always good, just and holy; doing all things well, justly and holily, and disposing them in wisdom.

But I, who am more inclined to go back than to go forward, continue not always in one state; for seven times have passed over me.

Yet it quickly becomes better when it pleases thee, and thou stretchest out thy helping hand; for thou alone, without the aid of man, canst assist me and so strengthen me that my countenance be no more changed towards other objects, but my heart be converted and rest in thee alone.

Wherefore, if I did but well know how to cast away from me all human consolation, either for the sake of attaining to devotion, or through the necessity of seeking thee because there is no man that can comfort me, then might I justly depend on thy grace, and exult in the gift of new consolation.

Thanks be to thee from whom all comes, as often as it goes well with me.

But I am vanity and nothing in thy sight, an unstable man and weak.

What have I, then, to glory in? or why do I desire to be esteemed?

Is it for my nothingness? This also is most vain.

Truly vain glory is an evil plague, a very great vanity; because it draws us away from true glory, and leaves us bare of heavenly grace.

For whilst a man takes pleasure in himself, he displeases thee; whilst he yearns after the praises of men, he is deprived of true virtue.

But true glory and holy joy is to glory in thee, and not in self, to rejoice in thy name, and not in our own virtue, and not to be delighted in any creature save only for thy sake.

Let thy name be praised, not mine; let thy work be magnified, not mine; let thy holy name be blessed; but to me let nothing be attributed of the praises of men.

Thou art my glory, thou the rejoicing of my heart.

In thee will I glory and rejoice all the day long; but for myself I will glory in nothing save in mine infirmities.

Let the Jews seek glory one man of another; I will seek that which is from God alone.

All human glory indeed, all temporal honour, all worldly grandeur, compared with thy eternal glory, is vanity and foolishness.

O my truth and my mercy, my God, blessed Trinity, to thee alone be praise, honour, power, glory, for endless ages of ages.

Chapter XLI.—Of the Contempt of all Temporal Honour.

Son, take it not to heart if thou seest others honoured and advanced, and thyself despised and humiliated.

Lift up thy heart to me in heaven, and the contempt of men on earth will not sadden thee.

Lord, we are in blindness, and are quickly seduced by vanity. If I look well into myself, never was any wrong done me by any creature, and therefore I cannot justly complain of thee.

But because I have often and grievously sinned against thee, all creatures are rightly arrayed against me.

To me therefore confusion and contempt are justly due; but to thee praise, honour and glory.

And unless I put myself in this disposition, to be willing to be despised and forsaken by all creatures, and to be esteemed nothing at all, I cannot arrive at inward peace and strength, nor be spiritually enlightened, nor fully united to thee.

Chapter XLII.—That our Peace is not to be Placed in Men.

Son, if thou placest thy peace in any man for the sake of thy contentment and his company, thou shalt be unsettled and entangled.

But if thou hast recourse to the ever-living and abiding truth, thou shalt not be grieved when a friend departs or dies.

In me the love of thy friend must stand; and for me he is to be loved, whoever he be that appears to thee good and very dear in this life.

Without me no friendship is firm, nor lasting; nor is that love true and pure which is not joined together by me.

Thou oughtest to be so far dead to such affections of men beloved, as to wish, as far as thou canst, to be without any human company.

By so much the more does a man draw nigh to God as he goes away from all earthly solace.

So much the higher also he ascends unto God, by how much he descends lower into himself, and grows viler in his own eyes.

But he who ascribes any thing of good to himself, hinders the grace of God from coming into him; for the grace of the Holy Spirit ever seeks an humble heart.

If thou couldest perfectly annihilate thyself, and

cast out from thyself all created love, then would it be my part to pour myself into thee with abundant grace.

When thou lookest towards creatures, the sight of the Creator is withdrawn from thee.

Learn, for the sake of the Creator, to overcome thyself in all things; then thou shalt be able to attain to the knowledge of God.

How little soever it be, if a thing be inordinately loved and regarded, it keeps thee back from the highest and corrupts thee.

Chapter XLIII.—Against Vain and Worldly Learning.

Son, be not moved with the fair and subtle sayings of men; for the kingdom of God is not in speech but in power.

Hearken to my words, which inflame the heart, and enlighten the mind; which excite to compunction, and infuse manifold consolations.

Never read the Word in order that thou mayest appear more learned or more wise.

Study to mortify thy vices; for this will avail thee more than the being able to answer many hard questions.

When thou hast read and shalt know many things, thou must always return to one beginning.

I am he who teaches men knowledge, and I give

a clearer understanding to little ones than can be taught by man.

He, to whom I speak, will quickly be wise, and will make great progress in spirit.

Woe to them who inquire of men after many curious things, and are little curious of the way to serve me.

The time will come, when Christ, the master of masters, the lord of angels, shall appear to hear the lessons of all men; that is, to examine the consciences of every one.

And then he will search Jerusalem with lamps, and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the arguments of tongues shall be hushed.

I am he who in an instant elevate an humble mind to comprehend more reasons of eternal truth than if a man had studied ten years in the schools.

I teach without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without parade of honour, without wrangling of arguments.

I am he who teach to despise earthly things, to loathe things present, to seek things eternal, to relish things eternal, to shun honours, to endure scandals, to repose all hope in me, to desire nothing out of me, and ardently to love me above all things.

For a certain man, by loving me in his inmost soul, learned divine things and spoke things wonderful.

He profited more by forsaking all things than by studying subtleties.

But to some I speak things common, to others special things; to some I appear sweetly in signs and figures, to others I unveil mysteries in much light.

The voice of the books is the same, but it teaches not all men alike; because I am the interior teacher, the truth, the searcher of the heart, the understander of thoughts, the furtherer of actions, distributing to every one as I judge fitting.

CHAPTER XLIV.—OF NOT DRAWING TO OURSELVES EXTERIOR THINGS.

SON, in many things it behoves thee to be ignorant; and to esteem thyself as dead upon earth, and as one to whom the whole world is crucified.

Many things also must thou pass by with a deaf ear, and think rather of those things which belong to thy peace.

It is more profitable to turn thine eyes from such things as displease thee, and to leave to every one his own way of thinking, than to be a slave to contentious discourses.

If thou standest well with God and lookest at his judgment, thou wilt more easily bear thyself when thou art worsted.

O Lord, to what are we come? Behold, a

temporal loss is greatly bewailed; for a small gain men toil and run; but spiritual detriment is soon forgotten, and hardly ever returns to mind.

That which is of little or no profit takes up our thoughts; and that which is above all things necessary is negligently passed over; for the whole man flows out upon outward things, and unless he quickly recovers himself, he is content to lie in those things that are without.

Chapter XLV.—That all Men are not to be Trusted; and that Men are Prone to Offend in Words.

Lord, give me help from trouble; for vain is the help of man.

How often have I not found faithfulness there, where I thought I was sure of it!

And how often have I found it there, where I little expected it!

Vain therefore is all hope in men; but the safety of the just is in thee, O God.

Blessed be thou, O Lord my God, in all things which befall us.

We are weak and unstable; we are quickly deceived and changed.

Who is the man that is able to keep himself so warily and circumspectly in all things, as not to fall sometimes into some deceit or perplexity?

But he who trusts in thee, O Lord, and seeks thee with a simple heart, does not so easily fall.

And if he come into some tribulation, in what manner soever he may be entangled therewith, he will quickly be either rescued or consoled by thee; for thou wilt not forsake him who trusts in thee to the end.

A trusty friend is rare, one who continues faithful in all the distresses of his friend.

Thou, O Lord, thou alone art most faithful in all things, and besides thee there is no other such.

Oh, how wise was that holy soul who said: My mind is strongly settled and grounded upon Christ.

If it were so with me, the fear of man would not so easily trouble me, nor the darts of words move me.

Who is able to foresee all things, who to provide against future evils?

If things foreseen nevertheless often hurt us, how can things unlooked for fail to wound us grievously?

But why did I not provide better for myself, wretch that I am? Why also have I so easily put my trust in others?

But we are men, nor aught but frail men, though by many we are reputed and called angels.

In whom shall I put my trust, O Lord? in whom but thee? thou art the Truth, who canst neither deceive nor be deceived.

And on the other hand, every man is a liar, infirm, unstable, and subject to fail, especially in words; so that we ought with difficulty to believe even that which in appearance seems to sound well.

How wisely dost thou forewarn us to beware of men, and that a man's foes shall be they of his own household, and that we are not to believe if any one should say: Lo here, or lo there.

I have been taught to my cost; and would that it may serve to make me more cautious, and not to increase my folly.

Be wary, saith one, be wary, keep to thyself what I tell thee. And whilst I hold my peace, and believe the matter to be secret, he himself cannot keep the secret which he desires me to keep, but presently betrays both me and himself, and goes his way.

From such tales and such unwary men defend me, O Lord; that I fall not into their hands, nor ever do the like.

Give to my mouth true and constant words, and remove far from me a crafty tongue.

What I will not endure I ought by all means to shun.

Oh, how good a thing and how peaceable it is to be silent about others, and not to believe indifferently all, nor easily tell out what we hear, to lay one's self open to few, always to seek thee, the beholder of the heart, and not to be carried about by every wind of words; but to wish that all things both

within and without may be done according to the pleasure of thy will.

How safe it is for the keeping of heavenly grace to shun the appearing in the sight of men, and not to seek those things which seem to cause admiration abroad, but with all diligence to follow after what brings amendment of life and fervour.

To how many has it been hurtful to have their virtue known and over-hastily praised!

How profitable indeed has grace been when kept with silence in this frail life, which is said to be wholly a temptation and a warfare!

Chapter XLVI.—Of having Confidence in God when Taunts arise against us.

Son, stand firm and trust in me; for what are words but words? they fly through the air, but hurt not a stone.

If thou art guilty, consider that thou wouldest gladly amend thyself.

If thou know nothing against thyself, think that thou wouldest be glad to bear this for God.

It is not enough that thou shouldest sometimes put up even with words, if thou hast not as yet the courage to endure hard stripes.

And why do such small things go to thy heart, but because thou art yet carnal, and regardest men more than thou shouldest?

For because thou art afraid of being despised, thou art not yet willing to be blamed for thy faults, and seekest the shelter of excuses.

But look better into thyself, and thou shalt find that the world is still living in thee, and a vain desire of pleasing men.

For when thou shrinkest to be abased and put to confusion for thy defects, it is very certain that thou art not truly humble, nor truly dead to the world, nor is the world crucified to thee.

But give ear to my word, and thou shalt not heed ten thousand words of men.

Behold, if all should be said against thee which the worst malice of men could invent, what hurt could it do thee if thou wouldest let it pass altogether by, and not care for it more than for a straw? Could it so much as pluck off even one hair from thee?

But he who has not his heart within, nor God before his eyes, is easily moved by a word of dispraise.

But he who trusts in me, and desires not to stand by his own judgment, will be free from the fear of men.

For I am the judge and discerner of all secrets; I know how the thing was done; I know him who did the wrong and him who suffered it.

From me this word went forth, by my permission this took place; that out of many hearts thoughts might be revealed.

I shall judge the guilty and the innocent; but

by a secret judgment I have desired beforehand to try them both.

The testimony of men oftentimes deceives; my judgment is true; it shall stand and not be overthrown.

It is hidden for the most part, and to few laid open in every thing; yet it never errs nor can err, though to the eyes of fools it seem not right.

To me therefore must thou run in every judgment, nor must thou depend upon thine own decision.

For the just man will not be troubled, whatever happens to him from God.

Even if any thing be wrongfully uttered against him, he will not greatly care.

Yet neither will he vainly rejoice if by others he be reasonably excused.

For he considers that I am he who search the reins and hearts, who judge not according to the face, nor according to human appearance.

For oftentimes that is found blameworthy in mine eyes which in the judgment of men is esteemed praiseworthy.

O Lord God, just judge, strong and patient, who knowest the frailty and perverseness of men, be thou my strength and all my trust, for mine own conscience suffices me not.

Thou knowest that which I know not; and therefore in every rebuke I ought to have humbled myself and borne it with meekness.

Pardon me therefore in thy mercy, as often as I

have not done thus, and give me again the grace of greater endurance.

For better to me is thine abundant mercy for the obtaining of pardon, than the justice which I imagine in myself for the defence of my hidden cōnscience.

Although my conscience accuse me not, yet I cannot herein justify myself; for, setting thy mercy aside, in thy sight no man living shall be justified.

Chapter XLVII. — That all Grievous Things are to be Endured for Life Everlasting.

Son, be not dismayed with the labours which thou hast taken on thee for me, neither let tribulations quite cast thee down; but let my promise strengthen and comfort thee in all events.

I am sufficient to requite beyond all mode and measure.

Not long shalt thou labour here, nor be always oppressed with sorrows.

Wait a little while, and thou shalt see a speedy end of evils.

An hour will come when all toil and tumult shall cease.

All is little and short which passes away with time.

Do what thou hast to do; labour faithfully in my vineyard; I will be thy reward.

Write, read, sing, sigh, keep silence, pray, bear manfully all that is against thee; eternal life is worth all these and greater combats.

Peace shall come in a day, known to the Lord; there shall not be day nor night, as in the time that now is; but everlasting light, infinite brightness, steadfast peace, and secure rest.

Then thou shalt not say: Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Nor shalt thou cry out: Woe to me, that my sojourning is prolonged. For death shall be cast down headlong, and there shall be never-failing health; no anxiety, but blessed delight, companionship sweet and fair.

Oh! hadst thou seen the everlasting crowns of the saints in heaven, and in how great glory they now triumph who once appeared contemptible to this world, and in a manner even unworthy of life; doubtless thou wouldest presently humble thyself to the ground, and wouldest seek rather to be under all than to have command over even one.

Neither wouldest thou covet the glad days of this life, but rather rejoice to suffer tribulation for God, and wouldest deem it thy greatest gain to be reputed as nothing amongst men.

Oh, if these things were sweet to thy taste, and sank deeply down into thy heart, how couldest thou dare even once complain!

Should not all toils be borne for everlasting life?

It is no small matter to lose or gain the kingdom of God.

Lift up therefore thy face to heaven; behold, I and all my saints with me, who in this world have had a great conflict, now rejoice, are now comforted, are now secure, are now at rest; and they shall for all eternity abide with me in the kingdom of my Father.

Chapter XLVIII.—Of the Day of Eternity, and of the Troubles of this Life.

O most blessed mansion of the city above! O most bright day of eternity, which no night darkens, but which the supreme truth ever enlightens; day always glad, always secure, and never changing its state for the contrary!

Oh, would that day had shone upon us, and that all these temporal things had come to an end!

It shines indeed upon the saints resplendent with everlasting brightness, but upon us pilgrims on earth only as afar off and through a glass.

The citizens of heaven know how full of joy is that day; but the banished children of Eve bewail themselves that this our day is bitter and wearisome.

The days of this life are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries; where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, racked with many fears, disquieted with many cares, distracted with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, encompassed with many errors, worn

down with many labours, burthened with temptations, unmanned with delights, tormented with want.

Oh, when will there be an end of these evils? When shall I be set free from the wretched bondage of my faults?

When, O Lord, shall I make mention of thee alone? When shall I to the full rejoice in thee?

When shall I be without any hindrance, in true liberty, without any trouble of mind or body?

When shall there be solid peace, peace unruffled, always secure, peace within and without, peace on all sides firm?

Good Jesus, when shall I stand to see thee? When shall I contemplate the glory of thy kingdom? When wilt thou be all in all to me?

Oh, when shall I be with thee in thy kingdom, which thou hast prepared for thy beloved from all eternity?

I am left a poor and banished man in the land of the enemy, where are wars every day and very great mischances.

Console my exile, soothe my sorrow, for all my desire sighs to thee; and all that this world offers for my solace is burthensome to me.

I long to enjoy thee in my inmost soul, but I cannot lay hold on thee.

I desire to cleave to heavenly things, but the things of this life and my unmortified passions bear me down. With my mind I desire to be above all

things, but with the flesh I am forced against my will to be subject to them.

Thus, unhappy man that I am, I fight with myself and am become a burthen to myself, whilst the spirit seeks to be above and the flesh to be below.

Oh, what do I suffer within, whilst in my mind I consider heavenly things, and presently a crowd of carnal thoughts interrupt me while I pray.

My God, remove not thyself far from me, and depart not in thy wrath from thy servant.

Send forth thy lightning and scatter them; shoot out thine arrows and let all the phantoms of the enemy be put to flight.

Gather together again my senses to thee; make me forget all worldly things; give me the grace speedily to cast away and to despise all the foul shapes of sin.

Help me, eternal Truth, that no vanity be my motive.

Come to me, heavenly sweetness, and let all impurity flee before thy face.

Pardon me also and forgive me in thy mercy, as often as I think of any thing else in prayer besides thee.

For I confess truly that I have been wont to be greatly distracted.

For oftentimes I am not there where I am bodily standing or sitting, but am rather there where my thoughts carry me.

There I am where my thought is, and there

oftentimes is my thought where that is which I love.

That thing readily comes to my mind which naturally delights me or which from habit is pleasing to me.

For this reason thou, O Truth, hast plainly said: Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also.

If I love heaven, I willingly think on heavenly things.

If I love the world, I rejoice with the prosperity of the world, and am troubled at its adversity.

If I love the flesh, I often picture to myself the things of the flesh.

If I love the spirit, I delight to think of spiritual things.

For whatsoever things I love, of these I willingly speak and hear, and carry home with me the images of them.

But blessed is the man, who for thee, O Lord, gives all things created leave to depart; who does violence to his nature, and through fervour of spirit crucifies the lusts of the flesh; that so with a calmed conscience he may offer to thee pure prayer, and may be worthy to be among the choirs of angels, all earthly things being shut out, whether external or internal.

Chapter XLIX.—Of the Desire of Eternal Life; and how Great Things are Promised to them that Strive.

Son, when thou perceivest a yearning after eternal bliss poured into thee from above, and that thou longest to go out from the tabernacle of the body, that thou mayest behold my glory without any shadow of change, open wide thy heart, and with all thy affection draw in this holy inspiration.

Render fullest thanks to the divine goodness, which deals so condescendingly with thee, which mercifully visits thee, ardently excites thee, and powerfully raises thee up, that thou fall not by thine own weight down to things of earth.

For it is not by thine own thought or endeavour that thou attainest to this, but only by the condescension of heavenly grace and divine regard, that thou mayest advance in virtues and greater humility, and prepare thyself for future conflicts, and labour with the whole affection of thy heart to cleave unto me, and to serve me with a fervent will.

Son, the fire often glows, but the flame ascends not without smoke.

So also the desires of some are ablaze after heavenly things, and yet they are not free from the temptation of carnal affection.

Therefore they are not acting purely for the honour of God in asking of him so earnestly.

And such is often thy desire, which thou wouldest have me to believe will be so urgent.

For that is not pure and perfect which bears some taint of self-interest.

Ask not what is delightful and convenient for thee, but what is pleasing and honourable to me; for if thou judgest rightly, thou oughtest to prefer and follow mine appointment rather than thine own desire, and before any thing desired.

I know thy desire, and I have heard thy many groanings.

Thou wouldest already be in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Already thou dost delight in thine eternal home and in the heavenly country, full of joy; but thine hour has not yet come; rather is there yet another time, a time of war, and toil, and trial.

Thou wishest to be filled with the highest good, but thou canst not now attain it.

It is I; wait for me, saith the Lord, till the kingdom of God come.

Thou must yet be tried upon earth and exercised in many things.

Consolation will from time to time be given thee, but to be fully satisfied shall not be granted thee.

Take courage therefore, and be strong as well in doing as in suffering things repugnant to nature.

Thou must put on the new man and be changed into another man.

Thou must oftentimes do that which thou willest not, and let alone that which thou willest.

That which is pleasing to others will go forward; that which thou wouldest have will not succeed.

That which others say will be hearkened to; what thou sayest will be esteemed as nought.

Others will ask and will receive; thou wilt ask and not obtain.

Others will be great in the mouths of men; but none will speak of thee.

Others will have this or that office; but thou wilt be accounted fit for nothing.

Nature will sometimes repine at this, and it will be no small matter if thou bear it with silence.

In these and many such-like things, the faithful servant of the Lord is wont to be tried, how far he has been able to renounce and break himself in all things.

There is scarcely any one thing in which thou hast so much need to die to thyself as in seeing and suffering things which are against thy will; and especially when that is commanded which seems to thee incongruous and to little purpose.

And because being set under authority, thou darest not resist the higher power, therefore thou art apt to think it hard to walk at the beck of another and wholly give up thine own opinion.

But weigh well, my son, the fruit of these labours,

how quickly they will end, and their exceeding great reward; and thou wilt not thence have trouble, but a strong solace to thine endurance.

For instead of this little will which now of thine own accord thou forsakest, thou shalt for ever have thy will in heaven.

For there thou shalt find all that thou hast wished for, all that thou canst desire.

There the wealth of all good will be thine without fear of losing it.

There thy will, being always one with mine, will desire nothing either out of thyself or in thyself.

There no one will resist thee, no man will complain of thee, no man hinder, nothing stand in thy way; but all things thou desirest will be present there together, and shall refresh thy whole affection and fill it to the full.

There I will give thee glory for the affronts thou hast endured; the garment of praise for sorrow; and, for the lowest place, a royal throne for all eternity.

There will the fruit of obedience come forth, there will the toil of penance rejoice, and humble subjection will be gloriously crowned.

Now therefore bow down thyself humbly under the hands of all, and heed not who it was that said or commanded this.

But let this be thy great care that, whether thy superior or inferior or equal demand any thing of thee or hint at any thing, thou take all in good part and strive with a sincere will to perform it.

Let one man seek this, another that; let this man glory in this, another in that, and be praised a thousand thousand times; but thou for thy part rejoice neither in this nor in that, but in the contempt of thyself and in my good pleasure and honour alone.

This is what thou oughtest to wish, that, whether in life or death, God may be always glorified in thee.

Chapter L.—How One that is Alone in the World ought to Commit Himself into the Hands of God.

O Lord God, holy Father, be thou now and for ever blessed; for as thou willest so has it been done; and what thou dost is good.

Let thy servant be glad in thee, not in himself, nor in any other; for thou alone art true joy, thou my hope and my crown, thou my gladness and mine honour, O Lord.

What has thy servant but what he has received from thee, and this without any merit of his own? Thine are all things which thou hast given and which thou hast made.

I am poor and in labours from my youth; and my soul is sometimes saddened unto tears, and sometimes is disturbed within herself by reason of sufferings at hand.

I long for the joy of peace; I beg again and

again for the peace of thy children, who are fed by thee in the light of thy consolation.

If thou givest peace, if thou infusest holy joy, the soul of thy servant shall be full of melody, and devout in thy praise.

But if thou withdraw thyself, as thou art very often wont, he will not be able to run in the way of thy commandments, but rather his knees are bent for the smiting of his breast; because it is not with him as it was yesterday and the day before, when thy lamp shone over his head, and he was covered under the shadow of thy wings from temptations coming on like a flood.

Father, just and always to be praised, the hour is come for thy servant to be tried.

Father, worthy of all love, it is fitting that thy servant should at this hour suffer something for thee.

Father, always to be honoured, the hour is come which thou didst foresee from all eternity, that thy servant for a short time should be outwardly oppressed, but inwardly live always to thee; that he should be a little slighted and humiliated, and should seem wanting in the sight of men; that he should be severely afflicted with sufferings and weaknesses; that so he may rise again with thee in the dawn of a new light, and be glorified in heaven.

Holy Father, this hast thou appointed, and so hast thou willed; and that has come to pass which thou hast ordained.

For this is a favour to thy friend that he should suffer and be afflicted in this world for the love of thee, how often soever and by whomsoever thou permittest it to befall him.

Without thy counsel and providence, and without cause, nothing is done upon earth.

It is good for me, Lord, that thou hast humiliated me, that I may learn thy statutes; and that I may cast away all uplifting of heart and all presumption.

It is useful for me that shame has covered my face, that I may seek for comfort to thee rather than to men.

I have also learned thereby to dread thine inscrutable judgments; who dost afflict the just together with the wicked, but not without equity and justice.

Thanks be to thee that thou hast not spared my sins, but hast worn me down with bitter stripes, inflicting pains and sending distress both within and without.

Of all under heaven there is none that can comfort me but thou, O Lord my God, the heavenly physician of souls, who smitest and dost heal, leadest down to hell, and bringest up again.

Thy chastisement is on me, and thy rod itself shall teach me.

Behold, dear Father, I am in thy hands; I bow myself down under the rod of thy correction.

Smite thou my back and my neck, that I may bend my crookedness to thy will.

Make me a pious and humble disciple of thine, as thou wert wont well to do, that I may walk at thine every sign.

To thee I commit myself, and all that is mine, to be corrected; it is better to be chastised here than hereafter.

Thou knowest all things and each thing, and there is nothing in the conscience of man hidden from thee.

Thou knowest things to come, before they are done; nor hast thou need that any should teach thee or remind thee of the things that are done upon earth.

Thou knowest what is expedient for my progress, and how serviceable tribulation is to rub away the rust of sin.

Do with me according to thy good pleasure which I have desired; and despise not my sinful life, to no one better or more clearly known than to thee alone.

Grant me, O Lord, to know what I ought to know, to love what I ought to love, to praise what is most pleasing to thee, to esteem what is precious in thy sight, to despise what is vile in thine eyes.

Suffer me not to judge according to the sight of the outward eyes, nor to pronounce according to the hearing of the ears of inexperienced men; but to determine both the things that are seen and spiritual things with true judgment, and above all things ever to seek thy good will and pleasure.

The minds of men are often deceived in judging,

and the lovers of this world are deceived in loving visible things alone.

What is a man the better for being reputed greater by man?

The cheat deceives the cheat, the vain the vain, the blind the blind, the weak the weak, whilst they extol them; and in truth one rather puts another to confusion whilst he vainly praises him.

For how much each one is in thine eyes, so much he is and no more, says the humble Saint Francis.

Chapter LI. — That We must Exercise Ourselves in Humble Works, when We cannot Attain to high Things.

Son, thou canst not always continue in a more than usually fervent desire of goodness, nor stand in a degree of contemplation higher than thy wont; but it must needs be that thou shouldest from time to time descend to lower things by reason of original corruption, and shouldest even unwillingly and wearily bear the burden of this corruptible life.

As long as thou carriest about with thee a mortal body, thou shalt feel weariness and heaviness of heart.

Thou oughtest therefore, as long as thou art in the flesh, oftentimes to bewail the burden of the flesh, for that thou canst not without intermission

engage in spiritual exercises and divine contemplation.

At these times it is expedient for thee to betake thyself to lowly works in the outer world, and to recreate thyself in good actions, to look for my coming and my heavenly visitation with firm hope, to bear with patience thy banishment and the dryness of thy mind, till thou be visited again by me, and delivered from all disquiet.

For I will make thee forget thy toils, and enjoy inward rest.

I will spread before thee the pleasant fields of the Scriptures, that with enlarged heart thou mayest begin to run in the way of my commandments.

And thou shalt say that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come which shall be revealed in us.

CHAPTER LII.—THAT A MAN OUGHT NOT TO ESTEEM HIMSELF WORTHY OF CONSOLATION, BUT RATHER DESERVING OF STRIPES.

LORD, I am not worthy of thy consolation nor of any spiritual visitation; and therefore thou dealest justly with me when thou leavest me poor and desolate.

For if I could shed tears as the sea, yet should I not be worthy of thy consolation.

Wherefore I am worthy only to be scourged

and punished, because I have grievously and often offended thee, and in many things greatly sinned;

So then, on a true account, I have not deserved even the smallest consolation.

But thou, good and merciful God, who willest not that thy works should perish, to show the riches of thy goodness towards the vessels of mercy, vouchsafest to comfort thy servant above human measure, and beyond all his deserts.

For thy consolations are not like the converse of men.

What have I done, O Lord, that thou shouldest bestow on me any heavenly consolation?

I can not recall to mind aught of good that I have done; but that I have been always prone to vice, and slothful to amend.

It is true, and I cannot deny it; if I should say otherwise thou wouldest stand against me, and there would be none to defend me.

What have I deserved for my sins save hell and the fire eternal? In truth, I confess that I am worthy of all scorn and contempt; neither is it fitting that I should be named among thy devout servants. And though it goes against me to hear this, because of truth I will confess against myself my sins, that so I may the easier deserve to obtain thy mercy.

What shall I say, who am guilty and full of all confusion?

I have no tongue to speak aught but this one word: I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; have mercy on me and pardon me.

Suffer me, therefore, that I may lament my sorrow a little before I go to the land that is dark, and covered with the mist of death.

What dost thou chiefly require of a guilty and wretched sinner but that he should feel contrition, and humble himself for his sins?

Of true contrition and humility of heart is born the hope of pardon, the disquieted conscience is reconciled, grace which was lost is recovered, a man is kept from the wrath to come, and God and the penitent soul meet together in a holy kiss.

Humble contrition for sins is an acceptable sacrifice to thee, O Lord; of far sweeter odour before thee than the smoke of incense.

This is also that pleasing ointment which thou didst will should be poured upon thy sacred feet; for never hast thou despised a contrite and humble heart.

There is a place of refuge from the face of the wrath of the enemy; there whatever stain has been elsewhere contracted, is effaced and washed away.

Chapter LIII.—That the Grace of God Unites not with those who have a Relish for Earthly Things.

Son, my grace is precious; it suffers not itself to be mingled with outward things or earthly consolations.

Thou must therefore cast away every obstacle to grace, if thou desire to be ready for the inpouring of it.

Choose a secret place for thyself; love to dwell with thyself alone; seek not the talking with any one; but rather pour out thy devout prayer to God, that thou mayest keep thy mind in compunction, and thy conscience pure.

Esteem the whole world as nothing; prefer the giving thy time to God before all external things.

For thou canst not have leisure both for me, and at the same time delight thyself in transitory things.

Thou must be far removed from thine acquaintance, and from those that are dear to thee, and keep thy mind to thyself, away from all temporal solace.

So the blessed apostle Peter beseeches the faithful of Christ to keep themselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world.

Oh, what great confidence will he have at the hour of his death who is not detained by an affection to any thing in the world!

But the having a heart thus perfectly set apart from all things is more than the disordered mind can as yet understand; neither does the natural man recognize the liberty of the interior man.

But if he will be spiritual indeed, he must renounce those who are near him as well as those who are afar off, and beware of none more than of himself.

If thou hast perfectly overcome thyself, thou wilt with more ease subdue all things else.

The perfect victory is to triumph over self.

For he who keeps himself in subjection, so that his appetite is subject to reason, and his reason in all things obedient to me; he is indeed a conqueror of himself, and lord of the world.

If thou wouldest fain mount thus high, thou must begin manfully, and lay the axe to the root, that thou mayest pluck up and destroy thy secret inordinate inclination to thyself, and to all selfish and material goods.

On this defect, that a man inordinately loves himself, hangs almost all in thee thou hast to root out and overcome; and when this evil has been once conquered and brought under, soon will there be great peace and tranquillity.

But because there are few who labour to die perfectly to themselves, and who fully tend beyond themselves; therefore do they remain entangled in themselves, nor can they be lifted in spirit above themselves.

But he who desires to walk with me at liberty, must mortify all his evil and inordinate affections, and must not from selfish love cling longingly to any thing created.

Chapter LIV.—Of the Different Motions of Nature and Grace.

Son, observe diligently the motions of nature and of grace; for they move in very opposite ways and very subtly, and can scarcely be distinguished but by him who is spiritual, and in his inmost heart enlightened.

All men indeed yearn after good, and pretend to something of good in all they do and say; therefore, under the semblance of good, many are deceived.

Nature is crafty and draws, ensnares, and deceives many, and has always itself for its end;

But grace walks with simplicity, declines from all appearance of evil, spreads no deceits, and does all things purely for God, in whom also as her last end she rests.

Nature is not willing to die or to be restrained, to be overcome or to be made subject; neither will she of her own accord be brought under;

But grace studies the mortification of self, resists sensuality, seeks to be subjected, desires to be overcome, is not bent on using her own liberty, loves to be held under discipline, and desires not to have the command over any one, but under God ever to live, stand, and be; and for the sake of

God is ever ready to bow herself down humbly under all human creatures.

Nature labours for her own advantage, and considers what gain may reach her from another.

But grace considers not what may be useful and of advantage to herself, but rather what may be profitable to many.

Nature willingly receives honour and respect;

But grace faithfully ascribes all honour and glory to God.

Nature is afraid of shame and of contempt.

But grace rejoices to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus.

Nature loves ease and bodily rest;

But grace cannot be unemployed, and gladly embraces toil.

Nature seeks to have things which are curious and fine, and abhors things which are cheap and coarse;

But grace is pleased with that which is plain and humble, disdains not rough things, nor shrinks from being clad in old clothes.

Nature has regard to temporal things, rejoices at earthly gain, is troubled at losses, and is provoked at every slight injurious word.

But grace looks intently on things eternal, and cleaves not to those which pass with time; neither is she disturbed at the loss of goods, nor exasperated with hard words; for she has placed her treasure and her joy in heaven, where nothing is lost.

Nature is covetous, and more gladly receives than gives, she loves to have things for her own and to herself;

But grace is compassionate and open-hearted, avoids self-interest, is contented with little, and judges it more blessed to give than to receive.

Nature inclines to creatures, to the flesh which is its own, to vanities and runnings to and fro;

But grace draws to God and to virtue, renounces creatures, flies the world, hates the desires of the flesh, restricts all gadding abroad, and blushes to appear in public.

Nature gladly has some outward solace in which it may take a sensible delight.

But grace seeks to be comforted in God alone, and to find delight in the Sovereign Good above all the things that are seen.

Nature acts wholly for her own gain and advantage; she can do nothing without price, but hopes to get something equal or better, or praise or favour, for her kindnesses; and longs to have her deeds and gifts and words much valued;

But grace seeks nothing temporal, nor requires in payment any other recompense than God alone, nor desires more of the necessaries of this life than so much as may help her to obtain the things eternal.

Nature rejoices in a multitude of friends and kindred; she glories in the nobility of her stock and descent; she fawns on those in power, flatters the rich, and applauds those who are like herself;

But grace loves even her enemies, and is not

puffed up with having a crowd of friends, nor sets she any store by family or birth, unless when joined with greater virtue : she favours rather the poor than the rich; her sympathy is with the innocent rather than the powerful; she rejoices with the truthful, and not with the deceitful; she ever exhorts the good to be zealous for the better gifts, and to be made like to the Son of God, by virtues.

Nature soon complains of want and inconvenience;

But grace bears poverty with constancy.

Nature turns all things back to herself, and for herself she labours and disputes;

But grace leads all things back to God, from whom, as their source, all things flow; she ascribes no good to herself, nor does she arrogantly presume of herself; she strives not, nor prefers her own opinion to others, but submits her own mind and judgment to the eternal wisdom and to the divine testing.

Nature covets to know secrets and to hear news; likes to be seen abroad, and to make trial of many things by the senses; longs to be noticed, and to do such things as may procure praise and admiration;

But grace cares not for the hearing of new and curious things, for all this springs from the old corruption, since nothing is new or lasting upon earth.

She teaches therefore to restrain the senses, to

avoid vain complacency and ostentation, humbly to hide those things which are worthy of praise and admiration, and from every thing and in every science, to seek the fruit of usefulness and the praise and honour of God.

She desires not to have herself or what belongs to her extolled, but wishes that God may be blessed in his gifts, who bestows all things of his mere love.

This grace is a supernatural light, and a certain special gift of God, the proper mark of the elect, and the pledge of eternal salvation, which elevates a man from the things of the earth to the love of heavenly things, and makes him spiritual who was carnal.

Wherefore, the more nature is kept down and subdued, the greater is the grace that is infused; and the spiritual man by new visitations is daily more reformed according to the image of God.

Chapter LV.—Of the Corruption of Nature, and of the Efficacy of Divine Grace.

O Lord my God, who hast created me after thine own image and likeness, grant me this grace which thou hast shown to be so great and so necessary to salvation, that I may overcome my very evil nature, which draws me to sins and perdition.

For I perceive in my flesh the law of sin contradicting the law of my mind, and leading me captive to obey my senses in many things; neither can I resist the passions thereof unless assisted by thy holy grace, glowingly infused into my heart.

I need thy grace, and great grace, to overcome nature, which is always prone to evil from her youth.

For she having fallen through the first man, Adam, and having been corrupted by sin, the penalty of this stain has come down upon all mankind; so that nature herself, which by thee was fashioned good and upright, now stands for the vice and infirmity of corrupted nature; since she tends, when left to herself, to evil and to things below.

For the little strength which remains is but as a spark hidden in the ashes.

This is our natural reason itself, wrapped around with a great mist, still able to judge between good and evil, and to discern the true and the false, though it be unable to fulfil all that it approves; and does not now enjoy the full light of truth, nor a healthy state of its affections. Hence it is, O my God, that according to the inward man I am delighted with thy law, knowing that thy command will prove to be good, just and holy, and reproving all evil and sin as what ought to be shunned.

And yet with the flesh I serve the law of sin, whilst I rather obey my senses than my reason.

Hence it is that to will good is present with me, but how to accomplish it, I find not.

Hence I often make many good resolutions; but because I lack grace to help my weakness, through a slight resistance I recoil and fall away.

Hence it comes to pass that I recognize the way of perfection, and see clearly enough what it is I ought to do; but being pressed down with the weight of my own corruption, I rise not to those things which are more perfect.

Oh, how exceedingly necessary is thy grace for me, O Lord, to begin that which is good, to continue it, and to perfect it!

For without it I can do nothing; but I can do all things in thee when thy grace strengthens me.

O grace truly of heaven, without which we have no merits of our own, neither are any of the gifts of nature to be valued!

No arts, no riches, no beauty or strength, no wit or eloquence, are of any worth with thee, O Lord, without grace;

For the gifts of nature are common to the good and bad; but grace or divine love is the proper gift of the elect, and they who are adorned with it are deemed worthy of eternal life.

This grace is so excellent that neither the gift of prophecy, nor the working of miracles, nor any speculation, how sublime soever, is of any value without it.

Nay not even faith, nor hope, nor any other

virtues, are acceptable to thee without charity and grace.

O most blessed grace, which makes the poor in spirit rich in virtues, and renders him who is rich with many goods humble of heart!

Come, descend upon me, replenish me betimes with thy consolations; lest my soul faint through weariness and dryness of mind.

I beseech thee, O Lord, that I may find grace in thy sight; for thy grace is enough for me, though I obtain none of those things which nature desires.

If I be tempted and afflicted with many tribulations, I will fear no evil whilst thy grace is with me.

She is my strength; she gives counsel and help.

She is more mighty than all mine enemies, and wiser than all the wise.

She is the mistress of truth, the teacher of discipline, the light of the heart, the solace of affliction, the banisher of sorrow, the remover of fear, the nurse of devotion, the producer of tears.

What am I without her but a dry tree, and an useless stock, fit only to be cast away?

Let thy grace therefore, O Lord, always prevent and follow me, and make me ever intent upon good works, through Jesus Christ thy Son. Amen.

Chapter LVI.—That we ought to Deny Ourselves, and Imitate Christ by the Cross.

Son, in so far as thou canst go out of thyself, so far wilt thou be able to pass over into me.

As the desiring nothing abroad brings peace at home, so to give up self inwardly unites us with God.

I will have thee go on to learn perfect renunciation of thyself in my will, without contradiction or complaint.

Follow me: I am the way, the truth, and the life.

Without the way there is no going, without the truth there is no knowing, without the life there is no living.

I am the way which thou must follow, the truth which thou must believe, the life which thou must hope for.

I am the way secure from harm, the truth which cannot fail, and the life which can have no end.

I am the straightest way, the sovereign truth, the true life, the blessed life, the uncreated life.

If thou abide in my way, thou shalt know the truth, and the truth shall make thee free, and thou shalt lay hold on life everlasting.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.

If thou wilt know the truth, believe me; if thou wilt be perfect, sell all thou hast.

If thou wilt be my disciple, deny thyself.

If thou wilt possess the blessed life, despise the present life.

If thou wilt be exalted in heaven, humble thyself in the world.

If thou wilt reign with me, bear the cross with me.

For none but the servants of the cross find the way of bliss and of true light.

Lord Jesus, forasmuch as thy way was narrow and despised by the world, grant that I may follow thee, though the world despise me;

For the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.

Let thy servant exercise himself in thy life, for there is my salvation and true holiness.

Whatever more than this I read or hear neither refreshes me, nor gives me full delight.

Son, as thou knowest these things and hast read them all, blessed shalt thou be if thou doest them.

He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And I will love him, and will manifest myself to him; and I will make him sit down with me in the kingdom of my Father.

Lord Jesus, as thou hast said and hast promised,

so may it be indeed, and may it be my lot to merit it.

I have received the cross, I have received it from thy hand; I will bear it; and bear it unto death, as thou hast laid it upon me.

Verily, the life of a good monk is a cross, but it leads him to paradise.

We have begun, it is not lawful to go back, nor should we leave off.

Come, then, my brethren; let us go forward together; Jesus will be with us.

For the sake of Jesus we took up this cross; for the sake of Jesus let us persevere in the cross.

He will be our helper, who is our captain and our forerunner.

Behold, our king goes on before us, and he will fight for us.

Let us follow him like men; let no one fear the terrors of the fight; let us be ready to die valiantly in battle; and let us not stain our glory by flying from the cross.

Chapter LVII.—That a Man should not be too much Dejected when he Falls into some Defects.

Son, patience and humility in adversity are more pleasing to me than much consolation and devotion in prosperity.

Why art thou disturbed at a little thing said against thee? if it had been more thou oughtest not to have been moved.

But now let it pass; it is not the first, nor any thing new, nor will it be the last if thou live long.

Thou art valiant enough so long as no adversity or opposition comes in thy way.

Thou canst also give good advice and encourage others with thy words; but when any unexpected trouble comes to thy door, then lackest thou counsel and courage.

Consider thy great frailty, which thou hast often experienced in small difficulties; yet it is for thy salvation when these or such-like things befall thee.

Put it away from thy heart, according to thy better knowledge; and if it has touched thee, yet let it not cast thee down, nor keep thee a long time entangled.

At least, bear it patiently, if thou canst not with joy.

And though thou be not willing to bear it, and feel indignation, restrain thyself, and suffer not any unseemly word to come out of thy mouth which may offend the little ones.

Soon will the commotion stirred up be soothed to rest, and thine inward smart will be sweetened by the return of grace.

As I live, saith the Lord, I am ready to help and comfort thee more than my wont, if thou put thy trust in me, and devoutly call upon me.

Keep thy mind calm and even, and gird thyself to a greater endurance.

All is not rendered vain if thou feel thyself often afflicted or grievously tempted.

Thou art man, and not God; thou art flesh, not an angel.

How couldst thou have ever remained in the same state of virtue, when this was not found in the angel in heaven, nor in the first man in paradise?

I am he who raise up and save them who mourn; and those who know their own infirmity I lead onward to my divinity.

O Lord, blessed be thy word; sweeter to my mouth than honey and the honey-comb.

What should I do in so great tribulations and anguish, if thou didst not encourage me with thy holy words?

So only I come at length to the haven of salvation, what matter is it how much or what I suffer?

Grant me a good end; grant me a happy passage out of this world; be ever mindful of me, O my God, and direct me by the straight road to thy kingdom. Amen.

Chapter LVIII.—Of not Searching into high Matters, nor into the Secret Judgments of God.

Son, take heed thou dispute not about high matters, nor about the hidden judgments of God; why this man is left thus, and that other is raised to so great grace; or why this person is so much afflicted, and that other so highly exalted.

These things exceed any power of man; neither is any reason or discourse able to trace out the judgments of God.

When therefore the enemy suggests to thee these things, or thou hearest curious men inquiring into them, give answer in the words of the prophet: Thou art just, O Lord, and thy judgment is right.

And again: The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves.

My judgments are to be feared, not to be searched into; for they are incomprehensible to human understanding.

Moreover, inquire thou not, nor dispute concerning the merits of the saints; which of them is more holy than the other, or which the greater in the kingdom of heaven.

These things oftentimes breed strifes and unprofitable contentions, and nourish pride and vain glory; whence arise envy and dissensions, whilst

one man proudly seeks to exalt this saint, and another man another.

Now to desire to know, and to search into, such things as these yields no fruit, but rather displeases the saints; for I am not the God of dissension, but of peace, which peace consists more in true humility than in exalting self.

Some are drawn by a zeal of love towards these saints or those with greater affection, but with affection rather human than divine.

I am he who made all the saints; I gave them grace; I have bestowed on them glory.

I know the merits of each; I prevented them by the blessings of my sweetness.

I foreknew my beloved before the ages.

I chose them out of the world; it was not they who first chose me.

I called them by grace, and drew them to me by mercy.

I led them through many temptations, I poured into their hearts marvellous consolations, I gave them perseverance, I have crowned their patience.

I know the first and the last; I embrace all with an inestimable love.

I am to be praised in all my saints; I am to be blessed above all things and to be honoured in each one of them, whom I have thus gloriously magnified and predestined without any foregoing merits of their own.

He, therefore, who despises one of the least of my saints, honours not him who is great; for I have made both small and great.

And he who derogates from any one of the saints derogates also from me, and from all others in the kingdom of heaven.

They are all one through the bond of love; they have the same sentiments, the same will, and all love each other as one.

And moreover, what is much higher, they all love me more than themselves and their own merits.

For, being carried up above themselves and drawn out of the love of themselves, they are wholly set on the love of me, in whom also they rest with enjoyment.

There is nothing which can divert them from me or lower their rank; for, being full of the eternal truth, they burn with the fire of a charity which cannot be extinguished.

Therefore, let carnal and sensual men forbear to dispute of the state of the saints, for they know not how to love any thing but their own delights. They add and take away according to their own inclination, not according to what is pleasing to eternal truth.

In many there is ignorance, especially in such as, being but little enlightened, seldom know how to love any one with a perfect spiritual love.

They are as yet much drawn towards such or such by a natural affection and human friendship; and as they are affected with regard to things below, so they form their ideas of the things of heaven.

But there is an incomparable distance between

what the imperfect imagine and what enlightened men contemplate by revelation from above.

Take heed, therefore, my son, that thou treat not curiously of these things, which exceed thy knowledge; but rather make it thy business and thy aim that thou be found even the least in the kingdom of God.

Even if any one should know who were more holy or held to be greater in the kingdom of heaven, what would this knowledge profit him, unless he would take occasion from knowing this to humble himself in my sight, and rise up to a greater praise of my name?

He does what is far more pleasing to God, who thinks of the greatness of his own sins, and the littleness of his own virtues, and how far is he who disputes about their greatness or smallness, from the perfection of the saints.

It is better to invoke the saints with devout prayers and tears, and to implore their glorious suffrages with a humble mind, than by a vain inquiry to search into their secrets.

They are well, yea perfectly contented, if men would be but contented, and would refrain from their vain discourses.

They glory not in their own merits, for they ascribe nothing of goodness to themselves, but all to me; because I bestowed all upon them out of my infinite charity.

They are filled with so great a love of the Divinity, and with such overflowing joy, that there is

nothing lacking to their glory, nor can any happiness be lacking to them.

All the saints, the higher they are in glory, the more humble are they in themselves, and the nearer to me, and the better beloved by me.

And therefore thou hast it written, that: They cast their crowns before God, and fell on their faces before the Lamb, and adored him who liveth for ever and ever.

Many inquire who is the greater in the kingdom of God, when they know not whether they shall be worthy to be numbered among the least.

It is a great matter to be even the least in heaven, where all are great; because all shall be called and shall be the children of God.

The least shall be as a thousand, and the sinner of a hundred years shall die.

For when the disciples asked who was the greater in the kingdom of heaven, they received this answer:

Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.

Woe to them who disdain to humble themselves willingly with the little children; for the low gate of the heavenly kingdom will not allow them to enter.

Woe also to the rich, who have their consolations here; for when the poor shall go into the

kingdom of God, they shall stand without lamenting.

Rejoice ye who are humble, and be glad ye who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; if indeed ye walk in truth.

Chapter LIX.—That all Hope and Confidence is to be Fixed in God alone.

Lord, what is my confidence which I have in this life, or what my greater comfort amongst all things which are seen under heaven?

Is it not thou, O Lord my God, whose mercies are without number?

Where was it ever well with me absent from thee, or when could things go ill with me when thou wast present?

I had rather be poor for thy sake, than rich without thee.

I choose rather to sojourn upon earth with thee, than to possess heaven without thee.

Where thou art there is heaven; and there is death and hell where thou art not.

Thou art my longing, and therefore I must needs sigh after thee, cry, and entreat.

In short, I cannot fully trust in any one to bring me more seasonable help in my necessities, save only in thee, my God.

Thou art my hope, thou my confidence, thou my comforter, and most faithful in all things.

All seek their own interest; thou aimest only at

my salvation and profit, and turnest all things to my good.

Even though thou expose me to various temptations and adversities, yet all this thou ordainest for my good; thou who art wont to prove thy beloved servants a thousand ways.

And in this proving of me thou oughtest no less to be loved and praised than if thou wert to fill me with heavenly consolations.

In thee, therefore, Lord God, I put all my hope and refuge, on thee I repose all my tribulation and anguish; for I find all to be infirm and unstable whatever I behold out of thee.

For neither will many friends avail me, nor strong helpers bring me succour, nor wise counsellors give an useful answer, nor books of learned men console me, nor all precious substance set me free, nor any secret and pleasant place keep me safe, if thou thyself stand not by me, help not, strengthen, cheer, teach and keep me.

For all things which seem to be for our peace and for our happiness are nothing when thou art absent; and in truth confer no happiness.

Thou therefore art the end of all good, the height of life, and the depth of all that can be uttered; and to trust in thee above all things is the greatest comfort of thy servants.

℣ To thee I lift mine eyes; in thee, my God, Father of mercies, I put my trust.

Bless and sanctify my soul with thy heavenly blessing, that it may be made thy holy habitation

and the seat of thy eternal glory; and in what thou hast deigned to make thy temple let nothing be found which may offend the eyes of thy majesty.

According to the greatness of thy goodness and the multitude of thy mercies, look down upon me, and give ear to the prayer of thy poor servant, banished far from thee in the region of the shadow of death.

Protect and keep the soul of thy poor servant amidst so many perils of this corruptible life, and direct him with the fellowship of thy grace through the path of peace to the country of everlasting light. Amen.

BOOK IV.

A DEVOUT EXHORTATION TO HOLY COMMUNION.

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A DEVOUT EXHORTATION TO HOLY COMMUNION.

THE VOICE OF CHRIST.

COME unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you, saith the Lord.

The bread, which I will give, is my flesh for the life of the world.

Take and eat: This is my body which shall be delivered for you: do this in remembrance of me.

He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.

The words which I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

CHAPTER I.—WITH HOW GREAT REVERENCE CHRIST IS TO BE RECEIVED.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

THESE are thy words, O Christ, eternal Truth, though not all delivered at one time nor written in one place.

Since therefore they are thy words and true, they are all to be received by me gratefully and with faith.

They are thine, and thou didst utter them; and they are also mine, because thou didst give them forth for my salvation.

Gladly do I receive them from thy mouth, that they may be more closely ingrafted on my heart.

Words of so great tenderness, full of sweetness and love, encourage me; but my own sins terrify me, and my unclean conscience beats me back from approaching to such great mysteries.

The sweetness of thy words invites me, but the multitude of my offences weighs me down.

Thou commandest me to draw near to thee with confidence if I would have part with thee; and to receive the food of immortality if I would obtain life and glory everlasting.

Come to me, thou sayest, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

O sweet and kindly word in the ear of a sinner, that thou, O Lord my God, shouldest invite the poor and needy to the communion of thy most sacred body!

But who am I, Lord, that I should presume to come to thee?

Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; and thou sayest, Come ye all to me.

What means this most compassionate condescension, and so friendly an invitation?

How shall I dare to approach, who am conscious to myself of no good on which I can presume?

How shall I introduce thee into my house, I who

have too often offended thy most gracious countenance?

Angels and the archangels stand in awe; the saints and the just are afraid; and thou sayest: Come ye all to me.

Unless thou, O Lord, hadst said it, who could believe it to be true?

And unless thou didst command it, who would attempt to draw near?

Behold, Noë, a just man, toiled an hundred years in building the ark, that he with a few might be saved; and I, how can I in one hour prepare myself to receive with reverence the maker of the world?

Moses, that great servant of thine and thy special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which he also covered with purest gold, that he might lay up therein the tables of the law; and shall I, a foul corrupted creature, presume so lightly to receive thee, the maker of the law and the giver of life?

Solomon, wisest of the kings of Israel, employed seven years in building a magnificent temple to the praise of thy name;

And for eight days he kept the feast of the dedication thereof; he offered a thousand peace-offerings, and solemnly, with sound of trumpet and with shoutings, set up the ark of the covenant in the place prepared for it;

And I, wretched and poorest of men, how shall I bring thee into my house; I, who can hardly

spend one half-hour devoutly? and would that I had ever once spent one half-hour as I ought!

O my God, how much did they endeavour to please thee! Alas, how little is it that I do! How short a time do I spend when I prepare myself to communicate!

Seldom am I wholly collected, very seldom free from all distraction.

And yet, surely, in the life-giving presence of thy Deity no unbecoming thought should occur to me, nor any thing created occupy my mind; for it is not an angel, but the lord of angels, whom I am about to entertain as my guest.

And yet there is a very great difference between the ark of the covenant with its relics, and thy most pure body with its unspeakable virtues; between those sacrifices of the law, which were figures of things to come, and the true sacrifice of thy body, which is the accomplishing of all those ancient sacrifices.

Why, then, do I not more ardently long for thy adorable presence?

Why do I not prepare myself with greater care to receive thy sacred gifts, since those holy patriarchs and prophets of old, kings also and princes with the whole people, have shown so great affection of devotion towards thy divine worship?

The most devout king David danced before the ark of God with all his might, commemorating

the benefits bestowed on the fathers in times past.

He made musical instruments of sundry kinds; he put forth psalms, and appointed them to be sung with joy; he himself likewise often sang to the harp, inspired with the grace of the Holy Ghost.

He taught the people of Israel to praise God with their whole heart, and to join their voices in blessing and magnifying him every day.

If so great devotion was then used, and such remembrance of the praise of God before the ark of the covenant, how great ought to be the reverence and devotion which I and all Christian people should have in the presence of this sacrament, in the receiving of the all-transcending body of Christ!

Many run to sundry places to visit the relics of the saints, and are astonished to hear of their wonderful works; they look at the spacious buildings of their churches, and kiss their sacred bones wrapt up in silk and gold;

And behold, thou art present here to me on the altar, thou, my God, saint of saints, creator of men, and lord of angels.

Oftentimes in seeing those things men are moved with curiosity and the novelty of things not yet seen, and but little fruit of amendment is reaped thereby, especially when men so lightly run hither and thither without true contrition.

But here in the sacrament of the altar thou art wholly present, my God, the man Christ Jesus; where also the fruit of eternal salvation is plentifully reaped, as often as thou art worthily and devoutly received.

And to this we are not drawn by any levity, curiosity, or by sense, but by a firm faith, a devout hope, and a sincere charity.

O invisible God, creator of the world, how wonderfully dost thou deal with us! how sweetly and graciously dost thou order all things with thine elect, to whom thou offerest thyself to be received in this sacrament!

For this passes all understanding; this in a particular manner attracts the hearts of the devout and enkindles their love.

For thy true faithful, who dispose their whole life towards amendment, frequently receive a great grace of devotion and love of virtue from this most worthy sacrament.

O, wonderful and hidden grace of this sacrament, which only the faithful of Christ know, but which unbelievers and those who serve sin cannot experience!

In this sacrament is conferred spiritual grace, the virtue lost is repaired in the soul, and the beauty comes back which had been disfigured by sin.

And so great sometimes is this grace, that from the abundance of the devotion which is granted,

not only the mind, but the frail body also, feels fuller strength bestowed on it.

Yet it is much to be lamented and bewailed that we should be so lukewarm and negligent as not to be drawn with greater affection to the receiving of Christ, in whom consist all the hope and the merit of those who are to be saved.

For he is our sanctification and redemption; he is the consolation of wayfarers, and the eternal enjoyment of saints.

It is therefore much to be lamented that many take so little heed to this saving mystery, which gladdens heaven, and upholds all the world.

Alas for the blindness and hardness of the human heart, which does not more consider so unspeakable a gift, and from daily habit even drifts down into heedlessness!

For if this most holy sacrament were celebrated in only one place, and consecrated only by one priest in the world, with how great longing thinkest thou would men be affected towards that place and to such a priest of God, that they might see the divine mysteries celebrated!

But now there are made many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater the more widely this holy communion is spread throughout the world.

Thanks be to thee, O Jesus, good shepherd, continuing ever, who hast vouchsafed to feed us poor

exiles with thy precious body and blood, and to invite us to the receiving of these mysteries with the words even of thine own mouth, saying: Come to me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

Chapter II.—That the Great Goodness and Love of God is shown to Man in this Sacrament.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

O Lord, trusting in thy goodness and in thy great mercy, sick I come to the Saviour, hungry and thirsty to the fountain of life, needy to the king of heaven, a servant to his Lord, a creature to the creator, in desolation to my merciful comforter.

But whence is this to me, that thou shouldest come to me? Who am I that thou shouldest give thyself to me?

How dare a sinner appear before thee? and how dost thou vouchsafe to come to a sinner?

Thou knowest thy servant, and thou knowest that he has nothing of good in himself that thou shouldest grant him this favour.

I confess therefore my unworthiness, I acknowledge thy bounty, I praise thy mercy, and I give thee thanks for thy exceeding love.

For it is of thine own mercy that thou doest this, not for my merits; in order that thy goodness

may be better known to me, that greater love may be imparted, and humility more perfectly set forth.

Since therefore this pleases thee, and thou hast bidden thus, thy gracious condescension pleases me also; and oh that my iniquity may not stand in my way.

O sweetest and most kind Jesus, how great reverence and thanks, with perpetual praise, are due to thee for the receiving of thy sacred body, whose dignity no man is found able to unfold!

But what shall I think of in this communion, when I am approaching to my Lord, whom I can never reverence as much as I ought, and yet whom I long to receive with devotion?

What can I think of better or more wholesome to my soul than to humble myself entirely in thy presence, and extol thine infinite goodness above me?

I praise thee, my God, and I extol thee for ever; I despise myself and subject myself to thee, casting myself down to the depth of mine unworthiness.

Behold, thou art the Most Holy One, and I am the scum of sinners.

Behold, thou bowest thyself down to me, who am not worthy to look up to thee.

Behold, thou comest to me; thou willest to be with me, thou invitest me to thy banquet.

Thou willest to give me heavenly food and the bread of angels to eat; verily none other than thy-

self, the living bread, who didst come down from heaven, and who givest life to the world.

Behold, whence love proceeds; what condescension shines forth; how great thanks and praises are due to thee for these things!

Oh, how wholesome and profitable thy design when thou didst institute this; how sweet and full of joy this banquet, in which thou givest thyself to be our food!

How admirable is thy working, O Lord; how mighty thy virtue; how infallible thy truth!

For thou spakest, and all things were made; and that was done which thou didst thyself command.

It is a wonderful thing, worthy of faith, and passing all human understanding, that thou, O Lord my God, true God and man, art contained whole and entire under a small appearance of bread and wine, and without being consumed, art eaten by him who receives thee!

Thou, the Lord of all things, who hast need of none, hast willed by thy sacrament to dwell in us.

Preserve my heart and my body without stain, that with glad and clean conscience I may often be able to celebrate thy mysteries, and to receive for mine eternal salvation what thou hast ordained and instituted, for thine own especial honour and perpetual memorial.

Be glad, O my soul, and give thanks to God for so noble a gift, and so singular a solace left thee in this vale of tears.

For as often as thou renewest this mystery and receivest the body of Christ, so often art thou dealing with the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ.

For the love of Christ never grows less, and the greatness of his propitiation is never exhausted.

Therefore oughtest thou to dispose thyself for this by an ever fresh renewal of thy mind, and to weigh with attentive consideration the great mystery of thy salvation.

And as often as thou sayest or hearest Mass, it ought to seem to thee as great, as new and as delightful, as if Christ that same day first descending into the womb of the Virgin had been made man, or hanging on the cross, was suffering and dying for the salvation of men.

Chapter III.—That it is Profitable to Communicate Often.

The voice of the disciple.

Behold, I come to thee, O Lord, that it may be well with me by thy gift, and that I may be made glad in thy holy banquet, which thou, O God, in thy sweetness hast prepared for the poor.

Behold, in thee is all I can or ought to desire; thou art my salvation and my redemption, my hope and my strength, my honour and my glory.

Gladden then this day the soul of thy servant, because, to thee, O Lord Jesus, do I lift up my soul.

I long to receive thee now devoutly and reverently; I desire to bring thee into my house, that, like Zachæus, I may receive thy blessing and be numbered among the children of Abraham.

My soul longs for thy body; my heart desires to be united with thee.

Give thyself to me, and it is enough; for beside thee no consolation avails.

Without thee I cannot subsist, and without thy visitation I cannot live.

And therefore it behoves me often to come to thee and receive thee for the help of my salvation; lest, perchance, I faint by the way if I be deprived of this heavenly food.

For so, most merciful Jesus, thou wert pleased once to say, when thou hadst been preaching to the people and curing divers diseases: I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way.

Deal therefore thus with me, thou who hast left thyself in the sacrament for the consolation of the faithful.

For thou art the sweet refection of the soul; and he who shall have eaten thee worthily shall be partaker and heir of everlasting glory.

It is indeed necessary for me, who so often fall and sin, and so soon grow sluggish and faint, by frequent prayers and confessions, and by the sacred receiving of thy body, to renew, cleanse, and

inflame myself; lest, perhaps, by abstaining too long, I slip away from my holy purpose.

For the imagination of man's heart is prone to evil from his youth; and unless the divine remedy come to his aid, man quickly falls to worse.

The holy communion therefore withdraws him from evil and strengthens him in good.

For if I am now so often negligent and lukewarm when I communicate or celebrate, what would it be if I took not this remedy, and sought not so great an help?

And although I am not every day fit nor well disposed to celebrate, yet I will endeavour at fitting times to receive the divine mysteries, and to render myself partaker of so great a grace.

For this is the one chief consolation of the faithful soul, so long as she sojourns far from thee in this mortal body, being in remembrance of her God as often as she can, to receive her beloved with devout mind.

O wonderful condescension of thy loving pity towards us, that thou, Lord God, the creator and the quickener of all spirits, shouldest vouchsafe to come to a poor soul, and with thy whole divinity and humanity give so rich food to her hunger!

O happy mind and blessed soul, which is in a state to receive thee, her Lord God, devoutly, and in receiving thee to be filled with spiritual joy!

Oh, how great a lord she entertains, how beloved a guest she brings into her house, how sweet

a companion she receives, how faithful a friend she welcomes, how beautiful and how noble a spouse she embraces, to be loved above all her beloved, and beyond all that she can desire!

Let heaven and earth, with all their array, be silent before thy face, O my most sweet beloved, for whatever praise or comeliness they have, is of thy condescension and bountifulness; nor can they compare with the beauty of thy name, of whose wisdom there is no number.

CHAPTER IV.—THAT MANY BENEFITS ARE BESTOWED UPON THEM WHO COMMUNICATE DEVOUTLY.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

O LORD my God, prevent thy servant in the blessings of thy sweetness, that I may deserve to approach worthily and devoutly to thy glorious sacrament.

Rouse my heart towards thee, and shake from me this heavy sluggishness.

Visit me with thy salvation, that in spirit I may taste thy sweetness, which lies hidden in all its fulness in this sacrament as in a fountain.

Lighten also mine eyes to behold so great a mystery, and strengthen me to believe it with an undoubting faith.

For it is thy working, not the power of man; thy sacred institution, not the invention of man.

For there is found no man able of himself to know and understand these things, which surpass even the keen vision of angels.

How shall I then, an unworthy sinner, who am but dust and ashes, be able to search into or conceive of so high and sacred a mystery?

O Lord, in the simplicity of my heart, with a good and firm faith, and in obedience to thy command, I draw near to thee with hope and reverence; and I verily believe that thou, God and man, art here present in the sacrament.

Thou willest, then, that I should receive thee, and make myself one with thee in love.

Wherefore I entreat thy mercy, and implore there may be bestowed on me a special grace for this, that I may be wholly melted away in thee and may overflow with thy love, and may no more concern myself about any consolation out of thee.

For this most lofty and most excellent sacrament is the health of soul and body, the remedy of all spiritual languor; in it my defects are healed, my passions restrained, temptations overcome or lessened, greater grace is infused, virtue once begun increased, faith confirmed, hope strengthened, charity inflamed and enlarged.

For thou hast bestowed, and still oftentimes dost bestow, many good things in this sacrament to thy beloved who communicate devoutly, my God, the upholder of my soul, the repairer of human infirmity, and the giver of all interior consolation.

For thou impartest unto them much consolation

to support them in their many troubles, and thou liftest them up from the depth of their own dejection to the hope of thy protection, and thou dost refresh and enlighten them inwardly with a certain new grace; so that they, who before communion were anxious, and felt themselves to be without affection, after being fed with this heavenly meat and drink, find themselves changed for the better.

And thou art pleased to deal with thine elect as a wise master, to the end that they may truly acknowledge and plainly experience how much of weakness they have in themselves, and what goodness and grace they obtain from thee.

For of themselves they are cold, hard and indevout; but by thee they are made fervent, cheerful and devout.

For who, approaching humbly to the fountain of sweetness, does not carry away thence some little sweetness?

Or who, standing near a great fire, does not receive from it some little heat?

And thou art a fountain always full and overflowing; a fire always burning and never failing.

Wherefore, if I cannot draw out of the fulness of the fountain nor drink my fill, I will at least set my mouth to the orifice of this heavenly pipe, that so I may draw thence some small drop to refresh my thirst, to the end that I wither not wholly away.

And if I cannot as yet be all heavenly and all on fire, like the Cherubim and Seraphim, I will yet endeavour to apply myself to devotion, and to

prepare my heart, so that I may seek, in the humble reception of this life-giving sacrament, some flame, however small, from the divine blaze.

And whatever is lacking to me, good Jesus, Saviour most holy, do thou in thy bounty and goodness supply for me, for thou hast vouchsafed to call all unto thee, saying: Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.

I labour indeed in the sweat of my brow, I am tormented with sorrow of heart, I am heavy laden with sins, I am troubled with temptations, and am entangled and pressed down with many evil passions; and there is none to help me, none to deliver and save me, but thou, Lord God, my Saviour, to whom I commit myself and all that is mine, that thou mayest keep me and bring me to everlasting life.

Do thou, who hast prepared thy body and blood for my meat and drink, receive me to the praise and glory of thy name.

Grant, Lord God, my Saviour, that with the frequenting of thy mystery, the affection of my devotion may increase.

Chapter V.—Of the Dignity of the Sacrament and of the Priestly State.

The Voice of the Beloved.

If thou hadst the purity of an angel, and the holiness of Saint John the Baptist, thou wouldest not be worthy to receive or handle this sacrament.

For this is not due to any merits of men, that a man should consecrate and handle the sacrament of Christ, and receive for his food the bread of angels.

Lofty is the ministry, and great the dignity of priests, to whom that is given which has not been granted to angels.

For priests alone, duly ordained in the Church, have power to celebrate and consecrate the body of Christ.

The priest indeed is the minister of God, using the word of God at the bidding and appointment of God; but God himself is there the principal author and the invisible worker, to whom is subject all that he wills, and to whose command everything is obedient.

Thou must therefore rather trust God the almighty in this most excellent sacrament than thine own sense or any visible sign; and therefore thou art to draw near to this work with fear and reverence.

Take heed to thyself, and see whose ministry

has been delivered to thee by the laying on of hands of the bishop.

Lo, thou hast been made a priest, and consecrated that thou mightest celebrate! see now that at fitting time thou faithfully and devoutly offer up sacrifice to God, and that thou show thyself to be blameless.

Thou hast not lightened thy burthen, but art now tied fast with a stricter band of discipline, and art bound to a greater perfection of sanctity.

A priest ought to be adorned with all virtues, and to give the example of a good life to others.

His conversation should not be with the vulgar and common ways of men, but with the angels in heaven, or with perfect men upon earth.

A priest clad in his sacred vestments holds the place of Christ, to pray to God for himself and for all the people in a suppliant and humble manner.

He bears before and behind the sign of his Lord's cross, that he may always remember the passion of Christ.

He bears the cross before him on his chasuble, that he may diligently behold the footsteps of Christ and fervently endeavour to follow him.

He is marked with the cross behind, that he may meekly suffer for God whatsoever adversities may befall him from others.

He wears the cross before him, that he may bewail his own sins; and behind him, that he may through compassion lament the sins of others, and

know that he is appointed to stand between God and the sinner; and not be slothful in prayer, and the holy oblation, until it is granted him to obtain grace and mercy.

When the priest celebrates, he honours God, he rejoices the angels, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, he obtains rest for the dead, and makes himself partaker of all good things.

Chapter VI.—An Inquiry concerning the Exercise proper before Communion.

The voice of the disciple.

When I consider thy greatness, O Lord, and my own vileness, I tremble exceedingly, and am confounded in myself.

For if I come not, I fly from life; and if I intrude unworthily, I incur thy displeasure.

What then shall I do, my God, my helper, and my counsellor in necessities?

Do thou teach me the right way; appoint me some short exercise proper for holy communion.

For it is useful to know in what manner I should reverently and devoutly prepare my heart for thee, for the receiving of thy sacrament to my soul's health, or even for celebrating so great and divine a sacrifice.

Chapter VII.—Of the Examination of our own Conscience, and of a Resolution of Amendment.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED.

Above all things it behoves the priest of God to come to the celebrating, handling, and receiving of this sacrament with the greatest humility of heart, and lowly reverence, with full faith, and a pious intention of the honour of God.

Diligently examine thy conscience, and to the best of thy power cleanse and purify it by true contrition and humble confession; so as not to have or know of any thing to give thee remorse, and hinder thy free access.

Conceive a sorrow for all thy sins in general, and more in particular lament and grieve for thy daily offences.

And if time allow, confess to God in the secret of thy heart all the miseries of thy passions.

Sigh and grieve that thou art yet so carnal and worldly; so unmortified from passions;

So full of the motions of lusts; so unguarded in thine outward senses; so often entangled with many vain imaginings;

So much inclined to things without; so negligent of those within;

So ready for laughter and frivolity; so hard to tears and compunction;

So disposed to relaxation and bodily comforts; so sluggish to austerity and fervour;

So curious to hear news and to see fine sights; so remiss to embrace things humble and abject;

So covetous to possess many things: so sparing in giving; so tenacious in retaining;

So thoughtless in speaking; so unable to hold thy peace;

So indecorous in thy habits; so over-eager in thy actions;

So greedy at meals; so deaf to the word of God;

So quick to rest; so slow to labour;

So wakeful for idle tales; so drowsy at holy vigils

So hasty to make an end; so wandering in attention; so negligent in saying office; so lukewarm in celebrating; so dry at communion;

So quickly distracted; so seldom fully recollected within thyself; so easily moved to anger; so apt to take offence at others;

So prone to judge; so harsh in rebuking;

So glad in prosperity; so weak in adversity;

So often proposing many good things, and carrying so little into effect.

Having confessed and bewailed these and other thy defects with sorrow, and a great displeasure at thine own weakness, make a firm resolution to be always amending thy life and advancing in goodness.

Then with entire resignation and the full force of thy will, offer thyself up to the honour of my

name on the altar of thy heart as a perpetual whole burnt-offering, by committing faithfully to me both thy body and soul;

If so be thou be thus deemed worthy to draw near to offer sacrifice to God, and to receive for thy health the sacrament of my body.

For there is no oblation more worthy, nor satisfaction greater for the washing away of sins, than to offer up thyself purely and entirely to God, together with the oblation of the body of Christ in the Mass and in communion.

If a man does what lies in him, and is truly penitent, as often as he shall come to me for pardon and grace: I am the living God, saith the Lord, who desires not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live, for I will no longer remember his sins, but all shall be forgiven him.

Chapter VIII.—Of the Oblation of Christ on the Cross, and of the Resignation of Ourselves.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED.

As with hands outstretched upon the cross, with body stripped and bare, I, of my own will, offered myself to God the Father for thy sins, so that nothing remained in me which was not turned into a sacrifice of divine propitiation;

Even so must thou also willingly offer thyself to me day by day in the Mass as a pure and holy oblation, together with all thy powers and affections, with all the inward devotion that thou canst.

What do I require more of thee than that thou shouldest make it thine aim to resign thyself wholly to me?

Whatsoever thou givest besides thyself I regard not; for I seek not thy gift, but thee.

As it would not suffice thee if thou hadst all things but me; so neither can it please me, whatever thou givest, so long as thou offerest not thyself.

Offer thyself to me, and give thyself wholly for God, and thy offering will be accepted.

Behold, I offered myself wholly to the Father for thee; I have moreover given my whole body and blood for thy food, that I might be all thine, and that thou mightest remain for ever mine.

But if thou wilt stand upon thine own self, and wilt not offer thyself freely to my will, thine offering is not perfect, nor will the union between us be entire.

Therefore, before all thy works thou must make a free oblation of thyself into the hands of God, if thou desirest to obtain liberty and grace.

For hence so few become enlightened, and inwardly free, because they do not wholly renounce themselves.

My sentence stands firm: Unless a man renounce all, he cannot be my disciple.

Therefore do thou, if thou desire to be my disciple, offer up thyself to me with all thine affections.

Chapter IX.—That we must Offer Ourselves and all that is Ours to God, and Pray for all.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

Lord, all things are thine which are in heaven, and which are in earth.

I desire to offer up myself to thee as a voluntary oblation, and to remain for ever thine.

Lord, in the simplicity of my heart I offer myself to thee this day to be thy servant evermore, to obey thee, and to become a sacrifice of perpetual praise.

Receive me with this sacred oblation of thy precious body, which I offer to thee this day in the presence of thine angels invisibly standing by, that it may be for salvation to me and all thy people.

Lord, I offer to thee all my sins and offences which I have committed in thy sight and in that of thy holy angels, from the day when I was first able to sin until this hour, upon thine altar of propitiation, that thou mayest burn and consume them all with the fire of thy love, and mayest wipe away every stain of my sins and cleanse my conscience from every fault, and mayest restore to me thy grace, which I have lost by sin, by fully pardoning all and receiving me in thy mercy to the kiss of peace.

What can I do for my sins but humbly confess and lament them, and without ceasing implore thy mercy?

Hear me, I beseech thee, in thy mercy, where I stand before thee, my God.

All my sins grieve me exceedingly; I will never commit them more; I am sorry for them, and will be sorry for them as long as I live; I am ready to do penance for them, and to make satisfaction to the utmost of my power.

Forgive, my God, forgive me my sins for thy holy name; save my soul, which thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.

Behold, I commit myself to thy mercy, I resign myself into thy hands.

Deal with me according to thy goodness, not according to my wickedness and iniquity.

I offer also to thee all the good I have, very small and imperfect though it be; that thou mayest make it better and sanctify it; that thou mayest be pleased with it, and make it acceptable to thee, and ever perfect it more and more; and that thou mayest, moreover, bring me, a slothful and unprofitable creature, to a good and happy end.

I offer to thee also all the pious desires of thy devout servants, the needs of my parents, friends, brethren, sisters, and all who are dear to me; and of all those who have been benefactors to me or others for the love of thee, or who have desired and begged me to offer up prayers and masses for

themselves and all belonging to them; whether they live still in the flesh, or whether they are already departed out of the world;

That they may all feel that there comes to them the assistance of thy grace, the benefit of thy consolation, protection from dangers, and deliverance from their pains; and that, being freed from all evils, they may with joy give exceeding great thanks to thee.

I offer up also to thee my prayers and sacrifices of propitiation for those in particular who have in any thing wronged, grieved or reviled me, or have done me any damage or displeasure;

And for all those likewise whom I have at any time grieved, troubled, injured and scandalized, by word or deed, knowingly or unknowingly; that it may please thee to forgive us all alike our sins and offences one against another.

Take, Lord, from our hearts all jealousy, indignation, wrath, and contention, and whatsoever may wound charity, and lessen brotherly love.

Have mercy, Lord, have mercy on those who crave thy mercy; give grace to those who stand in need thereof; and grant that we may be worthy to enjoy thy grace, and that we may attain to life everlasting. Amen.

Chapter X.—That the Holy Communion is not lightly to be Forborne.

The Voice of the Beloved.

Thou oughtest often to have recourse to the fountain of grace and of divine mercy, to the fountain of goodness and all purity; that thou mayest be healed of thy passions and vices, and mayest deserve to be made more strong and watchful against all the temptations and wiles of the devil.

The enemy, knowing the very great advantage and remedy which is laid up in the holy communion, strives by all means and occasions, as much as he is able, to withdraw and hinder faithful and devout men from it.

For when some are disposing themselves to prepare for holy communion, they suffer the greater assaults of Satan.

This wicked spirit, as it is written in Job, comes amongst the sons of God to trouble them with his wonted malice, or to make them over fearful and perplexed, that so he may lessen their devotion, or by his assaults take away their faith, if haply they may altogether forbear communion, or at least draw near with little fervour.

But there is no regard to be had to his wiles and suggestions, be they ever so filthy and abominable;

but all his delusions are to be turned back upon his own head.

The wretch is to be contemned and scorned, and the holy communion is not to be omitted for his assaults and the commotions which he excites.

Oftentimes also a man is hindered by too great a solicitude for obtaining devotion, and a certain anxiety about the confession he has to make.

Follow herein the counsel of the wise, and put away all anxiety and scruple; for it hinders the grace of God, and destroys devotion of mind.

Leave not holy communion for any small trouble and vexation, but go promptly to confession, and willingly forgive others their offences against thee.

And if thou hast offended any one, humbly crave pardon, and God will readily forgive thee.

What avails it to delay thy confession for a long time, or to put off holy communion?

Cleanse thyself thoroughly, spit out the venom presently, make haste to take this remedy, and thou shalt find it better for thee than if thou hadst deferred it for a long time.

If thou lettest it alone to-day for this cause, perhaps to-morrow a greater will fall out; and so thou mayest be hindered a long time from communion, and become more unfit.

With all possible speed shake off this heaviness and sloth; for it is to no purpose to continue long

in uneasiness, to pass a long time in trouble, and for these daily impediments to absent thyself from the divine mysteries.

Yea, it is very hurtful to defer holy communion long; for this usually causes great lukewarmness.

Alas, some lukewarm and frivolous persons are willing to put off their confession, and desire that their communion should be deferred, lest they should be obliged thereby to keep a stricter watch over themselves.

Ah, how little is their love, how weak is their devotion, who so easily put off holy communion!

How happy is he and acceptable to God, who so lives and keeps his conscience in such purity, as to be ready and well disposed to communicate even daily if it were permitted, and he might do it without being noticed.

If a man abstain now and then out of humility, or by reason of some lawful impediment, he is to be commended for his reverence;

But if sloth steal upon him he must bestir himself, and do what lies in him; and the Lord will assist his desire for the sake of that good intention which he specially regards.

And when he is lawfully hindered, he will yet always have a good will and pious intention to communicate, and so he shall not altogether lose the fruit of the sacrament.

For every devout man may every day and every hour come to receive Christ spiritually without any prohibition, and with great profit to his soul.

And yet on certain days and at the times appointed, he ought with an affectionate reverence to receive sacramentally the body of his Redeemer, and rather to make the praise and honour of God the motive than to seek his own consolation.

For he communicates mystically, and is invisibly fed, as often as he devoutly calls to mind the mystery of the incarnation and passion of Christ, and is inflamed with the love of him.

He who prepares himself only when a festival draws near, or when custom compels him thereunto, will often be unprepared.

Blessed is he who offers himself up as a whole burnt offering to the Lord as often as he celebrates or communicates.

Be neither too long nor too hasty in celebrating, but observe the good common way of those with whom thou livest.

Thou oughtest not to cause inconvenience or weariness to others, but to keep the common way according to the appointment of superiors ; and rather to consult the profit of others, than thine own devotion or inclination.

Chapter XI.—That the Body of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are most necessary to a Faithful Soul.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

O sweetest Lord Jesus, how great sweetness has a devout soul who feasts with thee in thy banquet, where there is no other food set before her to be eaten but thyself, her only beloved, and most to be desired above all the desires of her heart.

And to me indeed it would be delightful to pour out tears in thy presence from the inmost affection of my heart, and like the pious Magdalen, to wash thy feet with tears.

But where is this devotion, where is this plentiful shedding of holy tears?

Surely in thy sight, and in that of thy holy angels, my whole heart ought to glow and to weep for joy.

For I have thee truly present in the sacrament, though hidden under the appearance of something else.

For to behold thee in thine own divine brightness is what mine eyes would not be able to endure, nay, not even could the whole world abide the splendour of the glory of thy majesty.

In this therefore thou condescendest to my weakness, that thou hidest thyself under the sacrament.

I truly have and adore him whom the angels

adore in heaven, but I as yet in faith, they as he is and without a veil.

I must be content with the light of true faith, and must walk therein, until the day of eternal brightness breathes upon me, and the shadows of figures fall aslant.

But when that which is perfect shall have come, the use of sacraments shall cease; for the blessed in heavenly glory stand not in need of the healing aid of sacraments.

For they rejoice without end in the presence of God, beholding his glory face to face; and being transformed from their brightness into the brightness of the unfathomable Deity, they taste the Word of God made flesh, as he was from the beginning, and as he remains for ever.

When I call to mind these wonders, even every spiritual solace becomes a weary weight to me; because as long as I behold not my Lord openly in his glory, I hold as nothing whatsoever I see and hear in the world.

Thou art my witness, O God, that no one thing can comfort me, nor any thing created give me rest, but only thou, my God, whom I desire for ever to contemplate.

But this is not possible whilst I remain in this mortal state.

And therefore I must dispose myself to much patience, and must submit myself to thee in all my desires.

For thy saints also, O Lord, who now rejoice with thee in the kingdom of heaven, whilst they

were living, waited in faith and great patience for the coming of thy glory.

What they believed, I believe; what they hoped for, I hope for; and whither they have arrived, I trust that I also through thy grace shall arrive.

Meanwhile I will walk in faith, strengthened by the examples of thy saints.

I shall have, moreover, holy books for my solace, and for the mirror of my life, and above all these things, thy most holy body for a singular remedy and refuge.

For in this life I find that there are two things especially necessary for me, without which this miserable life would be insupportable to me.

Whilst I am kept in the prison of this body I acknowledge myself to need two things, namely, food and light.

Thou hast therefore given to me, weak as I am, thy sacred body for the refreshment of my soul and body, and thou hast set thy word as a lamp to my feet.

Without these two I could not well live; for the word of God is the light of my soul, and thy sacrament is the bread of life.

These also may be called the two tables set on the one side and on the other in the store-house of the holy church.

One is the table of the holy altar, having the holy bread, that is, the precious body of Christ;

The other is that of the divine law, containing holy doctrine, teaching the right faith, and firmly

leading even within the veil, where is the holy of holies.

Thanks be to thee, Lord Jesus, light of eternal light, for the table of holy doctrine which thou hast afforded us by the ministry of thy servants, the prophets and apostles, and other teachers.

Thanks be to thee, O thou Creator and Redeemer of men, who, to manifest thy love to the whole world, hast prepared a great supper, wherein thou hast set before us to be eaten, not the typical lamb, but thy most sacred body and blood; rejoicing all the faithful with thy holy banquet, and intoxicating them with the cup of salvation, in which are all the delights of paradise; and holy angels feast with us, but with a more happy sweetness.

Oh, how great and honourable is the office of priests, to whom it is given to consecrate with sacred words the Lord of majesty, to bless him with their lips, to hold him with their hands, to receive him with their own mouth, and to administer him to others!

Oh, how clean ought those hands to be, how pure that mouth, how holy that body; how unspotted will be the heart of a priest into whom the author of purity so often enters.

Nothing but what is holy, no word but what is good and profitable, ought to proceed from the mouth of a priest, who so often receives the sacrament of Christ.

His eyes ought to be simple and chaste, which are wont to behold the body of Christ; his hands pure and lifted up to heaven, which are wont to handle the Creator of heaven and earth.

Unto the priests especially it is said in the law: Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

Let thy grace, O Almighty God, assist us, that we, who have undertaken the office of the priesthood, may serve thee worthily and devoutly in all purity and good conscience.

And if we cannot live in such great innocency of life as we ought, grant us at least to bewail duly the sins which we have committed, and in the spirit of humility and the resolution of a good will to serve thee more fervently for the time to come.

Chapter XII.—That he, who is to Communicate, ought to Prepare Himself for Christ with great Diligence.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED.

I AM the lover of purity, and the giver of all holiness.

I seek a pure heart, and there is the place of my rest.

Make ready for me a large room furnished, in which to sup, and I will make the passover with thee together with my disciples.

If thou wilt have me come to thee, and remain

with thee, purge out the old leaven, and make clean the habitation of thy heart.

Shut out the whole world, and all the tumult of vices; sit like a sparrow alone on the housetop, and think of thy transgressions in the bitterness of thy soul.

For every lover prepares the best and fairest abode for his dearly beloved; for hereby is known the affection of him who entertains his beloved.

Know, nevertheless, that thou canst not do enough towards this preparation by the merit of what thou doest, although thou shouldest prepare thyself a whole year together, and think of nothing else.

But it is merely of my goodness and grace that thou art suffered to draw near to my table; as if a beggar were invited to the dinner of a rich man, and he had nothing else to return him for his benefits but to humble himself and give him thanks.

Do what lies in thee, and do it diligently, not out of custom nor from necessity; but with fear and reverence and affection receive the body of thy beloved Lord God, who vouchsafes to come to thee.

I am he who have invited thee, I have commanded it to be done, I will supply what is lacking in thee; come and receive me.

When I bestow the grace of devotion, give thanks to thy God; not because thou art worthy, but because I have had mercy on thee.

If thou hast it not, but rather findest thyself dry,

continue instant in prayer, sigh and knock, and give not over until thou receivest some crumb or drop of saving grace.

Thou needest me, I have no need of thee.

Neither dost thou come to sanctify me, but I come to sanctify thee, and make thee better.

Thou comest that thou mayest be sanctified by me and united to me, that thou mayest receive new grace, and be inflamed anew to amendment.

Neglect not this grace, but prepare thy heart with all diligence, and bring thy beloved in unto thee.

But thou oughtest not only to prepare thyself by devotion before communion, but carefully also to keep thyself therein after receiving the sacrament; neither is the carefully guarding of thyself afterwards less required than the devoutly preparing of thyself before; for a good guard afterwards is the best preparation for again obtaining greater grace.

For what renders a man very much indisposed is the giving himself up too much to outward consolations.

Beware of much talk, remain in secret, and enjoy thy God; for thou hast him whom all the world cannot take from thee.

I am he to whom thou oughtest to give thy whole self; so that thou mayest henceforward live not in thyself but in me, without any anxious care.

Chapter XIII.—That a Devout Soul ought to Desire with her Whole Heart to be United to Christ in the Sacrament.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

O that it were given me to find thee alone, O Lord, that I may open my whole heart to thee, and enjoy thee as my soul desires; and that none may now deign to notice me, nor any thing created affect or regard me; but that thou alone mayest speak to me, and I to thee, as the beloved is wont to speak unto his beloved, and a friend to entertain himself with his friend.

This I pray for, this I desire, that I may be wholly united to thee, and may withdraw my heart from all created things; and by the holy communion and often celebrating, may learn more to relish heavenly and eternal things.

Ah, Lord God, when shall I be wholly united to thee and absorbed in thee, and altogether forgetful of myself?

Thou in me, and I in thee; and so grant us both to continue in one.

Verily, thou art my beloved, the chosen out of thousands, in whom my soul is well pleased to dwell all the days of her life.

Thou truly makest peace for me, thou, in whom is sovereign peace and true rest; out of whom are labour and sorrow, and endless misery.

Verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, and thy counsel is not with the wicked; but thy conversation is with the humble and the simple.

Oh, how sweet is thy spirit, O Lord, who, to show thy sweetness towards thy children, dost vouchsafe to feed them with the most delicious bread which comes down from heaven!

Surely, there is no other nation so great, which has its gods so nigh to it, as thou our God art present to all thy faithful; to whom, for their daily solace, and for raising up their heart to heaven, thou givest thyself to be eaten and enjoyed.

For what other nation is there so renowned as the Christian people?

Or what creature under heaven so beloved as a devout soul, to whom God comes, that he may feed her with his glorious flesh? O grace unspeakable; O marvellous condescension; O unmeasured love, bestowed on man alone!

But what return shall I make to the Lord for this grace, and for so choice a love?

Nothing can I give him that will please him more than if I offer my whole heart to God, and unite it closely to him.

Then all that is within me shall sing for joy, when my soul shall be perfectly united to God. Then will he say to me: If thou wilt be with me, I will be with thee; and I will answer him:

Vouchsafe, Lord, to abide with me; my will and my wish is to be with thee.

This is all my desire, that my heart may be united to thee.

CHAPTER XIV.—OF THE ARDENT LONGING OF SOME DEVOUT MEN FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

OH how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee.

When I call to mind some devout persons who come to thy sacrament with the greatest devotion and affection, I am often confounded and ashamed within myself, that I approach with such lukewarmness and coldness to thine altar, and to the table of the holy communion;

That I remain so dry and without affection of heart; that I am not wholly set on fire in thy presence, O my God, nor so mightily drawn and affected as many devout persons have been, who out of a vehement desire of communion, and the sensible emotion of their hearts, were unable to refrain themselves from weeping;

But from the depth of their souls they eagerly thirsted to approach both with the mouth of their heart and their body to thee, O God, the living fount,

being in no wise able to allay or appease their hunger but by receiving thy body with all joy and spiritual eagerness.

O true ardent faith of these men, which stands forth as a strong presumption of thy sacred presence!

For they truly know their Lord in the breaking of bread, whose heart burns so mightily within them because Jesus walks with them.

Such affection and devotion as this, so vehement a love and ardour, is often far from me.

Be thou merciful to me, O good Jesus, sweet and gracious; and grant me, thy poor bedesman, sometimes at least, to feel in holy communion some little of the cordial affection of thy love, that my faith may grow stronger, my hope in thy goodness increase, and that my charity, being once perfectly enkindled, and having tasted the heavenly manna, may never fail.

For mighty is thy mercy to grant me even the grace I long for, and to visit me in thy great clemency with the spirit of fervour when the day of thy good pleasure shall have come.

For though I burn not at present with so great a desire as those who are so singularly devoted to thee, yet by thy grace I desire to have this same greatly inflamed desire, praying and desiring that I may be made partaker with all such thy fervent lovers, and be numbered in their holy company.

Chapter XV.—That the Grace of Devotion is Obtained by Humility and Self-denial.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED.

Thou oughtest to seek the grace of devotion earnestly, to ask it fervently, to wait for it patiently and confidently, to receive it thankfully, to keep it humbly, to cöoperate with it diligently, and to commit to God the duration and manner of this heavenly visitation, until he come.

Especially oughtest thou to humble thyself when thou feelest inwardly little or no devotion; and yet not to be too much cast down, nor to be grieved above measure.

God often gives in one short moment what he has a long time denied.

He giveth sometimes in the end that which in the beginning of prayer he deferred to give.

If grace were always presently given and ever at hand according to our wish, it would be more than weak man could well bear.

Therefore the grace of devotion is to be waited for with a good hope and humble patience.

Yet impute it to thyself and to thy sins when it is not given thee, or when it is taken away thou knowest not why.

It is sometimes a little thing that hinders or hides

grace ; if indeed that may be called little, and not rather great, which hinders so great a good.

But if thou remove this hindrance, be it small or great, and perfectly overcome it, that shall be which thou hast asked.

For as soon as thou hast delivered thyself up to God with thy whole heart, and neither seekest this nor that for thine own pleasure or will, but wholly placest thyself in him, thou shalt find thyself united to him and at peace ; for nothing will relish so well, and please thee so much, as the good pleasure of the divine will.

Whosoever therefore with a single heart shall have directed his intention upwards to God, and purified himself from all inordinate love or dislike of any created thing, he will be the fittest to receive grace, and shall be worthy of the gift of devotion.

For the Lord there bestows his blessing where he finds the vessels empty.

And the more perfectly a man forsakes things below, and the more he dies to himself by the contempt of himself, the more speedily grace comes, the more plentifully it enters in, and the higher it lifts up the free heart.

Then shall he see and abound, shall wonder, and his heart shall be enlarged within him, because the hand of the Lord is with him, and he has put himself wholly into his hand for ever. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who seeks God with his whole heart, and has not received his soul in vain.

This man in receiving the holy eucharist merits the great grace of divine union; because he looks not to his own devotion and consolation, but above all devotion and consolation regards the honour and glory of God.

Chapter XVI.—That we ought to Lay Open our Needs to Christ, and Crave His Grace.

THE VOICE OF THE DISCIPLE.

O most sweet and loving Lord, whom I now desire to receive with devotion, thou knowest my weakness and the necessity which I am under; in how great evils and vices I am lying, how often I am weighed down, tempted, troubled, and defiled.

To thee I come for remedy; to thee I pray for comfort and succour; I speak to him who knows all things, to whom all within me is manifest, and who alone can perfectly comfort and help me. Thou knowest what good things I most need, and how poor I am in virtues.

Behold, I stand before thee poor and naked, begging for thy grace and imploring thy mercy.

Cheer thy famishing suppliant, enkindle my coldness with the fire of thy love, enlighten my blindness with the brightness of thy presence.

Turn for me all earthly things into bitterness, all things grievous and adverse into patience, all

things grovelling and created into contempt and forgetfulness.

Raise up my heart to thee in heaven, and suffer me not to stray to and fro upon earth.

Be thou alone sweet to me from henceforth for evermore; for thou only art my meat and drink, my love and my joy, my sweetness and all my good.

Oh, that with thy presence thou wouldest wholly enkindle and consume me, and transform me into thyself, that I may be made one spirit with thee by the grace of inward union, and by the melting of ardent love!

Suffer me not to go from thee an hungred and athirst, but deal with me in thy mercy as thou hast often dealt wonderfully with thy saints.

What marvel if I should be wholly set on fire by thee, and should die out in myself, since thou art a fire always glowing and never failing, a love purifying the heart and enlightening the understanding?

Chapter XVII. — Of Fervent Love and Vehement Desire to receive Christ.

The voice of the disciple.

With the greatest devotion and burning love, with all the affection and fervour of my heart, I desire to receive thee, O Lord, as many saints and devout persons, who were most pleasing to thee in

holiness of life, and most fervent in devotion, have desired thee in communion.

O my God, eternal love, my whole good, never-ending happiness, I long to receive thee with the most vehement desire and most befitting reverence which any of the saints have ever had or could feel.

And although I am unworthy to have all those feelings of devotion, yet I offer to thee the whole affection of my heart, as if I alone had all those most pleasing and enflamed longings.

Yea, and whatsoever a pious mind can conceive and desire, all this with the greatest reverence and most inward affection I offer and present to thee.

I desire to reserve nothing to myself, but freely and most willingly to sacrifice myself and all that is mine to thee.

O Lord my God, my creator and my redeemer, I desire to receive thee this day with such affection, reverence, praise and honour, with such gratitude, worthiness and love, with such faith, hope and purity, as thy most holy mother, the glorious Virgin Mary, received and longed for thee, when she humbly and devoutly answered the angel who declared to her the mystery of the incarnation: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word.

And as thy blessed forerunner, most excellent among the saints, John the Baptist, in thy presence leaped for joy through the Holy Ghost, whilst he was yet shut within his mother's womb; and afterwards seeing Jesus walking amongst men,

humbling himself exceedingly, said with devout affection: The friend of the bridegroom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth with joy because of the bridegroom's voice; so I also wish to be inflamed with great and holy desires, and to present myself before thee with my whole heart.

Wherefore I here offer and present to thee the rejoicings of all devout hearts, their ardent affections, the raptures of their minds and supernatural illuminations and heavenly visions, together with all the virtues and praises which have been or shall be celebrated by all creatures in heaven and earth; for myself and all such as are commended to my prayers, that by all thou mayest be worthily praised and glorified for ever.

Receive my vows, O Lord my God, and my longing desire to give thee infinite praise and blessing without bound, which according to the multitude of thy unspeakable greatness, are justly due to thee.

These I render and desire to render thee every day and every moment, and with my prayers and affections I invite and entreat all the heavenly spirits, and all thy faithful, to join with me in giving thee praises and thanks.

Let all people, nations, and languages praise thee, and magnify thy holy and sweet name with utmost jubilation and ardent devotion.

And let all who reverently and devoutly celebrate thy most high sacrament, and receive it with full faith, deserve to find grace and mercy

at thy hands, and pray as suppliants for me a sinner.

And when they have obtained the devotion sought, and joyful union, and depart from thy sacred heavenly table well comforted and wonderfully refreshed, let them vouchsafe to remember me who am poor.

Chapter XVIII.—That a Man be not a Curious Searcher into this Sacrament, but a Humble Follower of Christ, submitting Sense to Holy Faith.

THE VOICE OF THE BELOVED.

Thou must beware of curious and unprofitable searching into this most profound sacrament, if thou wilt not sink into the depth of doubt.

He who too closely scans its majesty shall be overwhelmed by its glory.

God is able to do more than man can understand.

A pious and humble inquiry after truth is allowable, always ready to be taught, and seeking ever to walk in the sound decisions of the fathers.

O blessed simplicity, which leaves the difficult ways of dispute, and goes on in the plain and sure path of God's commandments.

Many have lost devotion whilst they would search into things too high.

Faith is required of thee, and a guileless life, not loftiness of understanding, nor the depth of the mysteries of God.

If thou dost not understand nor comprehend those things which are beneath thee, how shouldest thou comprehend those things which are above thee?

Submit thyself to God, and humble thy sense to faith, and the light of knowledge shall be given thee, so far as shall be profitable and necessary for thee.

Some are grievously tempted about faith and the sacrament; but this is not to be imputed to them, but rather to the enemy.

Be not anxious, dispute not with thy thoughts, nor answer the doubts which the devil suggests; but believe the words of God, believe his saints and prophets, and the wicked enemy will fly from thee.

It is often very profitable to the servant of God to suffer such things.

For the devil tempts not unbelievers and sinners, whom he already surely holds; but he many ways tempts and sorely tries the faithful and devout.

Go forward therefore with a sincere and undoubting faith, and with a humble reverence draw near to this sacrament; and whatsoever thou art not able to understand, commit in perfect confidence to almighty God.

God deceives thee not; he is deceived who trusts too much in himself.

God walks with the simple, reveals himself to the humble, gives understanding to little ones, discloses his meaning to pure minds, and hides his grace from the curious and proud.

Human reason is weak, and may be deceived; but true faith cannot be deceived.

All reason and natural research ought to follow faith, and not to go before it, nor to weaken it.

For therein especially faith and love take the lead, and work by hidden ways in this most holy and superexcellent sacrament.

God, who is eternal and incomprehensible, and of infinite power, does great and inscrutable things in heaven and earth, nor is there any searching out his wonderful works.

If the works of God were such as might be easily comprehended by human reason, they would not be called wonderful and unspeakable.

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